

The History of Gaelic Scotland: The Highlands since 1880.

Chapter One: The Crofters' Wars	2
Chapter Two: Land and Politics	47
Chapter Three: Population Matters	105
Chapter Four: Emigration	146
Chapter Five: Developing the Highlands	179
Chapter Six: A Martial Tradition	237
Chapter Seven: Language and People	281
Chapter Eight: A History of Highland Politics	325
Bibliography:	367

Chapter One.

The Crofters' War, 1882–8.

The period from 1873 to 1888 is seminal in the modern history of the Scottish highlands. The first date marks the foundation of the *Highlander* by John Murdoch, followed in 1874 by the Bernera Riot and the election to Parliament of Charles Fraser Mackintosh. The second date denotes the end of the most active phase of the Crofter' War with the conviction and sentencing of those involved in the disturbances at Aignish and Galson in Lewis. These years saw a series of concerted protests which brought the highland land question to the forefront of political debate.¹ The protests which took place from the evictions at Leckmelm in Wester Ross in 1879–80 to land raids and riots in Lewis in 1887–8 were remarkable for their extent, concerted nature and political effects. This period also saw male crofters in Highland constituencies gain the right to vote and, initially at least, use this new power to elect representatives who highlighted their grievances. June 1886 saw the passage of the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act, which granted security of tenure and legal definition to the crofters.

The 1870s and 1880s were also a period of growing cultural confidence and activity in the Highlands as the Gaelic Society of Inverness, the Federation of Celtic Societies and less formal groups of Gaels in urban Scotland developed political campaigns on linguistic and educational matters. The political campaigns in which the crofters engaged, their

¹Andrew G. Newby, 'Land and the "crofter question" in nineteenth-century Scotland', *International Review of Scottish Studies*, 35 (2010), 7–36.

evidence to the Napier Commission, the journalism and poetry stimulated by the protests brought the memory of the clearances to the surface of Scottish culture in a new way. Further, the events of this important period formed a new layer of memory and reference which later campaigners, throughout the period covered by this book, would draw on for inspiration and justification.

New methods of political communication began to present themselves. Cheap newspapers such as John Murdoch's *Highlander* and, in time, Duncan Cameron's *Oban Times* advanced the cause of the crofters in polemical journalism. The highlands also became a subject of interest to newspapers from other parts of the UK, especially Ireland.² The 1880s were also the decade in which the crofters found their voice and were provided with the ideal forum in which to make it heard. In the spring of 1883 Gladstone's Liberal government granted the long-standing demand to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate the grievances of the crofters. This development might be viewed cynically, as an attempt to roll the issue into a siding. It did not work out this way. The Commission toured the Highlands, took evidence, largely from crofters but also from clergy and some representatives of the landed classes, and was widely reported in the press. This publicity, as well as the growing organisation of the crofters' movement, and the widespread interest it generated, ensured that no siding was long enough to contain the question: a situation the advocates of a commission had hoped for and its opponents had feared. It is overly simplistic to draw a direct line from the Commission to the Act of 1886, as the latter was based on very different principles from those in the

² Andrew Dunlop, *Fifty Years of Irish Journalism* (Dublin, 1911), 86–99; Dunlop reported on the aftermath of the Battle of the Braes for the *Freeman's Journal* in Dublin, sending his report by telegraph from Portree at 4am on a Sunday it appeared the next day in the morning edition of his paper.

idealistic report written by the Chairman of the Commission, Lord Napier. Nevertheless, after the effect of the crofter evidence on public opinion (and despite attempts to discredit it) it was difficult for the government to avoid trying to settle the issue somehow. Various stratagems were attempted between the report's publication in 1884, the return (after six months out of office) of the Liberals to government in January 1886 and their successful effort to pass legislation. Even the short-lived Conservative government of late 1885 and early 1886 recognised this and took some steps towards legislation. So, it is clear that there is a broad interpretation of the events of the 1880s which stressed their novelty, singularity and significance.

*

Although there were novel elements to the protest of the 1880s, not least its organisation and politicisation, protest was not a new phenomenon. The idea of the passive Gael responding in a submissive manner to the forces of dispossession which swept the region has long been recognised as a caricature.³ The process of clearance had been punctuated with violent protest from the attempt to drive the sheep from eastern Sutherland and Ross in 1792 to the riots against eviction and food exports in the 1840s and 1850s.⁴ The latter episode provides a precedent for the 1880s: it saw soldiers being ferried around the north-east coast in ships and landed at the places of protest, such as Wick, where in February

³ E. Richards, 'How tame were the Highlanders during the clearances?', *Scottish Studies*, xvii (1973), 35–50; E. Richards, 'Patterns of Highland Discontent, 1790–1860', in R. Quinault and J. Stevenson, (eds), *Popular Protest and Public Order: Six Studies in British History, 1790–1820* (London, 1974), 75–114

⁴ Eric Richards, *A History of the Highland Clearances: Agrarian Transformation and the Evictions, 1746–1886* (London, 1982), 249–83; Eric Richards, *The Last Scottish Food Riots*, Past and Present Supplement 6 (London, 1982); Ewen A. Cameron, 'Internal policing and public order, c.1797–1900', in Edward M. Spiers, Jeremy A. Crang and Matthew J. Strickland (eds), *A Military History of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2012), 446–7.

1847 troops fired on rioters, an act which was widely criticised.⁵ Although there was an episodic element to these protests there were other themes which recurred in the Crofters' War. Perhaps the most important was an ambiguous attitude to landlords. The targets of protest were the agents of the landlord, the factors and estate managers who were either directly in the employ of the landlord or who jobbed in such a capacity for a variety of landlords.⁶ The second target was the Sheriff Officers charged with carrying out the decisions of the civil courts in cases where interdicts had to be served on crofters.⁷ The case of the unfortunate man sent to the Coigach peninsula in Wester Ross to serve summonses of removal on crofters who was stripped of his clothes, perhaps by the women of the place, and despatched back to Ullapool in a wretched state, is the best documented of attempts to humiliate the forces of the law.⁸ This pattern would be often repeated in the 1880s and there were many deforcements (the prevention of an officer of the law from carrying out his duty). There was often a sense that these functionaries misrepresented the landlord, who was often seen as a higher court of appeal in the interests of justice and equity.

This was a theme of the events at Bernera in the west of Lewis, on the estate of Sir James Matheson, in 1874. The subsequent trial turned into an attempt to expose the regime of a tyrannical factor, Donald Munro.⁹ A Gaelic poem about the events at Bernera brings out

⁵ NRS, Lord Advocate's Papers, AD56/308 contains extensive material about this episode; *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, vol. 90, cols 832–4 (4 Mar. 1847).

⁶ Annie Tindley, "'They sow the wind, they reap the whirlwind': estate management in the post-clearance highlands, c. 1815 to c. 1900", *Northern Scotland*, new series, 3 (2012), 66–85.

⁷ Recently identified as the forgotten element of the crofters' war, see letter from Roderick MacPherson (Sheriff Officer, Glasgow) to *Herald*, 25 April 2012, 15.

⁸ Eric Richards, 'Problems on the Cromartie Estate, 1851–3', *SHR*, 52 (1973), 149–64.

⁹ *Report of the So-Called Bernera Rioters at Stornoway on the 17th and 18th July 1874* (no place, 1874); James Shaw Grant, *A Shilling for Your Scowl: The History of a Scottish Legal Mafia* (Stornoway, 1992),

this theme. After lamenting the ‘tyranny of one of Satan’s black angels’ Murdo MacLeod of Glasgow goes on to discuss the interaction of the men of Bernera with Sir James Matheson:

Nuair a chunnaic e tre uinneig
Na bha muigh ga iarriadh
De threun-fhir throma dhèanadh pronnadh,
Nam bu chron bu mhiann leibh,
Thàinig agus dh’èisd e ribh
‘S am Beurla rinn sibh sgial dha,
Mar bha sibh air ur sàrachadh
Fo làimh a dhroch fhear-riaghlaidh

(When he saw you through the window/those who were seeking him –/all those
heavy warriors who could crush bones/if they had an evil intent –
he came and listened to you,/and in English you gave him your account/of how
you had been oppressed/under the hand of the bad administrator.)¹⁰

The estates of the dukes of Sutherland and Argyll were characterised by similar local dictatorships. In the former case this was in the form of the remarkable Evander McIver,

137–58; John MacLeod, *None Dare Oppose: The Laird, the Beast and the People of Lewis* (Edinburgh, 2010), 196–249.

¹⁰ Donald E. Meek (ed.), *Tuath is Tighearna: Tenants and Landlords. An Anthology of Gaelic Poetry of Social and Political Protest from the Clearances to the Land Agitation (1800–1890)*, (Edinburgh, 1996), 87, 211.

a Gaelic-speaking native of Lewis who remained in the service of the house of Sutherland for fifty years and was one of the few factors to write his memoirs.¹¹

Although the main cycle of protest ended in early 1888, with the sentences handed down to the rioters at Aignish and Galson on Lewis, it remained a recurring pattern until the 1920s. Indeed, the series of land raids which took place after the Great War drew on the traditions and memory of the Crofters War. Even as late as the Knoydart land raid of 1948 there was evidence of an awareness of the precedent set in earlier periods. On that occasion Duncan MacPhail, reflecting on their tactical withdrawal from the land, remarked: ‘we would have been better to have done what the boys in the old days did, stick on the ground until they put you to gaol’.¹² Thus, the land agitation of the 1880s was the latest in a long tradition of protest going back to the late eighteenth century. Further, it was conceived with an awareness of that tradition and served to provide exemplars for later protesters who drew explicitly on earlier events.

*

The arrival of the *Lively* naturally excited much interest in Skye. Perhaps since King James V visited Portree, and gave its name to the place, no ship ever visited the island, the mission of which was of so much interest to the inhabitants ... The

¹¹ Tindley, *Sutherland Estate*, 173; Evander McIver, *Memoirs of a Highland Gentleman: Being the Reminiscences of Evander McIver of Scourie*, (ed.) Rev. George Henderson (Edinburgh, 1905).

¹² I.F.Grigor, ‘The seven men of Knoydart’, in Billy Kay (ed.), *The Complete Odyssey: Voices from Scotland’s Recent Past* (Edinburgh, 1996), 77.

first place we visited was the Braes of Portree, where the disturbances began which are now happily at an end, and will, it is hoped, never be repeated.¹³

This account by Alexander Nicolson, a member of the Napier Commission, makes a bold claim for its importance, although the final sentence suggests his objectives as a Commissioner were less than radical.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the Napier Commission does have some claim to being the central event of the decade.¹⁵ The appointment of a Commission was a long-standing demand of the crofters' movement.¹⁶ Gaelic poetry of the period indicates that a profound sense of optimism greeted the news that the government had agreed to an enquiry. Charles MacKinnon's 'Fàilte a' Choimisein/Welcome to the Commission' and John MacLean's 'Teachdairean na Bànrighinn/Commissioners of the Queen' are examples. In addition, both poets expressed an expectation that the Commission would bring direct and tangible benefits to the crofters.¹⁷ When appointed, the Commission was composed of: Lord Napier, a border landowner and former diplomat with experience in the USA, Russia and India; Charles Fraser MacKintosh the MP for Inverness burghs, soon to reinvent himself as a crofter MP; Alexander Nicolson, the Sheriff of Kircudbright, a native of Skye and a noted Gaelic scholar and mountaineer; Professor Donald MacKinnon, newly appointed Professor of Celtic at the University of Edinburgh; Donald Cameron of Lochiel, Conservative MP for Inverness-shire; his fellow

¹³ Alexander Nicolson, 'The last cruise of the *Lively*', *Good Words for 1883*, 606–12. The *Lively* was the ship on which the Commissioners travelled. It foundered off Stornoway later in 1883 and the Commissioners and their records had a very narrow escape.

¹⁴ Bernhard Maier, 'A kaleidoscope of Victorian Scotland: the life of Alexander Nicolson (1827–1893)', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 26 (2010), 56–7.

¹⁵ A. D. Cameron, *Go Listen to the Crofters: The Napier Commission and Crofting a Century Ago* (Stornoway, 1986); I.M.M. MacPhail, 'The Napier Commission', *TGSI*, 48 (1972–4), **PAGES**.

¹⁶ *TGSI*, 7 (1877–8), 51–2; *Highlander*, 29 Dec. 1877, 5 Jan. 1878; *Inverness Advertiser*, 2 Mar. 1883.

¹⁷ Meek, *Tuath is Tighearna*, 124–7, 237–9.

landowner Kenneth MacKenzie of Gairloch (a Liberal) completed the membership of the Commission. Malcolm MacNeill, nephew of Sir John MacNeill author of the 1851 Report on emigration from the highlands supported the Commission as secretary. His membership was the occasion of some disappointment in the crofters' movement who interpreted it as being dominated by landlords and their factors. There had been moves to have appointed someone like Alexander Mackenzie who would be recognised clearly as a representative of the crofters but this came to naught.¹⁸

The importance of the Commission was not based on the influence of its recommendations, as this was minimal. The important element of the proceedings of the Commission was the evidence. Testimony by crofters and their representatives dominated the proceedings; clergymen were the next most numerous group to appear.¹⁹ The assertive crofter evidence is often adduced as a key element in the fight-back of the crofting community which characterised the decade.

There is much to support this viewpoint but it is not the whole story. The contexts in different localities, the interplay between the estate management and the tenants and the tensions that were brought into play, merit closer attention.²⁰ The opening session of the Commission, at Braes in Skye, served to highlight the vulnerability of the crofters as much as their assertiveness. The first witness, Angus Stewart, sought an assurance that he would not be evicted as a result of his evidence. Napier explained that he could not give

¹⁸ MacPhail, *Crofters' War*, 67.

¹⁹ Allan W. MacColl, *Land, Faith and the Crofting Community: Christianity and Social Criticism in the Highlands of Scotland, 1843–1893* (Edinburgh, 2006), 105–25.

²⁰ See John Lorne Campbell, 'The Crofter's Commission in Barra, 1883', in John Lorne Campbell (ed.), *The Book of Barra* (Stornoway, 1998), 198–204; Tindley, *Sutherland Estate*, 65–75.

such an assurance but the Portree solicitor Alexander Macdonald, factor for Lord Macdonald and other Skye landlords, was called and asked to assure Stewart and other witnesses that they would not be victimised. The exchange with Macdonald, who had to have a qualified assurance dragged out of him, is suggestive of a factor determined to retain every means of keeping the crofters in a vulnerable position. Stewart was reassured to a sufficient degree to allow him to continue with his statement and to answer the Commissioners' questions. This represents a subtle shift of relations in a highland estate context. Nevertheless, this was not decisive. Many landowners were contemptuous of the crofters' evidence. The Mackintosh of Mackintosh referred to them as 'crotchetmongers'; Major Fraser of Kilmuir described them as 'malcontents urged on by agitators' and William Gunn, factor to the earl of Cromartie, scorned them as 'ungrateful'.²¹ Even the Secretary to the Commission, Malcolm MacNeill, later argued that the 'tone of the crofters' evidence ... indicates a deep hostility to landlords with whom, but two years before, they had lived on terms of mutual regard ... they made the most of their case – not always (or often) by fair statement...'.²² There were suspicions of the crofters' evidence among landlords and factors on the grounds that it was not sincere or truthful. Fraser of Kilmuir's comment about 'agitators' was a reference to the work of activists like John Murdoch and Alexander Mackenzie who toured the highlands in advance of the Commission encouraging the crofters to give evidence about the extent of their grievances. Murdoch saw his role as 'mitigating the adverse influences of men who had for so long kept the crofters in a state of unworthy fear'. MacKenzie was, for once, in

²¹ Highland Archive, Kilmuir Estate Papers, AG/Inv/10/29, Fraser to Alexander MacDonald, 4 Nov. 1883; NRS, MacKintosh Muniments, GD176/2633/31, MacKintosh to Allan Macdonald, 15 Oct. 1883; Eric Richards and Monica Clough, *Cromartie: Highland Life, 1650–1914* (Aberdeen, 1989), 323.

²² NRS, AF67/401, 'Confidential Reports to the Secretary of Scotland on the condition of the Western Highlands and Islands, October 1886'

agreement with Murdoch. He told the Commissioners that ‘those who ... had the worst grievances to tell, would not muster courage to present them....’²³ Napier dealt with this issue in the opening section of his report. He argued that the task of preparing evidence showed the disparity between the crofters and the estate managers. The latter had extensive records at their disposal and the means to refer to public documents or to consult legal professionals about their evidence. The crofters had none of this. Napier, an open-minded and intellectually curious man, concluded that although the crofter evidence may not have been factually correct in every detail it had a moral force and was corroborated by what was ‘written in indelible characters on the surface of the soil’.²⁴ A further point of importance arising from the evidence to the Napier commission is the way in which the crofter evidence exposed the history of the clearances in an entirely new way. One newspaper was correct in its prediction that the Commission would ‘throw a much-needed light on the manner in which these poor men and women have been treated in the past’.²⁵ Although there had been polemical accounts of the evictions, especially those in Sutherland,²⁶ it was the Napier Commission which brought the full history of the process into the public eye. Our memory of the clearances is built on the crofter witnesses who dealt with events of a couple of generations earlier. They drew attention to many grievances: insecurity of tenure, factorial tyranny, lack of compensation for improvements, loss of common grazing land, rack renting, excessive local taxation, indebtedness to merchants, overcrowding and the encroachment of

²³ PP 1884 XXXIII–XXXVI, *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Condition of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, q. 44463 (Murdoch), q. 41085 (MacKenzie).

²⁴ *Commission, Report*, 2.

²⁵ *Dundee Courier*, 1 Jun. 1883, 4.

²⁶ Especially Donald MacLeod’s *Gloomy Memories in the Highlands of Scotland* (Toronto, 1857); the complex history of this text is dealt with in C.W.J. Withers, ‘Landscape, memory, history: gloomy memories and the 19th-century Scottish highlands’, *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 121 (2005), 29–44.

sporting estates. The main problem, however, was shortage of land and the root cause of this was the history of clearance that the crofting community had undergone over the previous century. Crofters from all over the highlands provided details about the evictions which had affected the areas in which they lived. Even when they had not themselves been evicted they described the way in which the evicted were foisted onto already overcrowded crofting communities and a landless class of cottars was created.²⁷ Echoes of the clearances come through at practically all points in the proceedings. In October 1883, at the sitting of the Commission in the High Court in Edinburgh, Thomas Sellar, son of Patrick, was called to give evidence. A newspaper account reported that he ‘was, on crossing the floor of the court, hissed by several persons among the audience’.²⁸

Although there are many places where this theme of building an image of the clearances comes through clearly it is perhaps most powerful in the case of Sollas in North Uist. These clearances were important episode because of the protests engaged in by the people, the violent response of the estate and the authorities and the fact that those evicted and forced to emigrate ended up on HMS Hercules, a ship which endured a wretched journey to Australia after disease broke out among its passengers. These elements were all brought before the Commissioners and the public by the testimony of John Morrison, a sixty-year-old crofter from Loch Eport in North Uist.

²⁷ This runs through the whole four volumes of evidence given to Napier and his colleagues but for examples see *Commission*, q. 11675, South Uist; q. 12248 – 52, North Uist; q. 17386, Lewis; q. 26955 and qq. 27196–230, Assynt; q. 33607, Tiree.

²⁸ *Scotsman*, 23 Oct. 1883, 3.

About thirty-two years ago we were evicted from the district of Sollas, a fertile part of this parish. There we lived in ease and plenty, in a happy and prosperous condition, until we became objects of the covetous eyes of the land-grabbing and aggrandising powers that be, and we soon realised that might was right. The first indication of this was the depriving us of a large portion of our grazing and arable land, which was added to another farm, as well as other hardships, which reduced us in our circumstances, until at last we were finally evicted about thirty-two years ago, as we have mentioned. Those evictions rank among the most notorious which have taken place in the Highlands, being now handed by posterity under the appellation of the “Blar Shollash,” or the “Battle of Sollas.” To this engagement was attributed the death of at least one individual, the permanent disablement of others, the imprisonment of some, and the great loss to many of their personal property. It resulted of course in a victory for the nobles, and the defeat and utter discomfiture of the peasantry. As is always the case, this battle was fruitful of immense sufferings, hardships, and loss to the defeated. Many of them were compelled to emigrate to the colonies, but fresh trials awaited them before getting to their destination.²⁹

Sollas was an unusual clearance in that it there were already a number of published accounts of the events. The clearance and subsequent trial of the rioters was well reported in the press. Some of the newspaper accounts, including those in the *Inverness Advertiser* and the *Northern Ensign*, were sympathetic to the people. Lord Cockburn and the factor who had presided over the clearance, Thomas Cooper, had written accounts of what went

²⁹ *Commission*, q. 12437.

on in North Uist at that time. What was missing, and what was provided by Morrison's evidence to the Napier Commission, was the voice of the crofters. Although Morrison perhaps idealised the prosperity of the pre-clearance period the politicised nature of his rhetoric is striking. Whether this was as a consequence of advice from John Murdoch or Alexander MacKenzie is not important. It is a product of the way in which the history of the clearances had become part of the political debate over the highland land question. This was an important result of the protests of the early part of the Crofters War and the organised activities of the nascent Highland Land Law Reform Associations. Morrison presented his history of the 'Battle of Sollas' not just as an event in which the Trustees of the indebted Lord Macdonald attempted to evict the crofters but as one in which the 'land-grabbing and aggrandising powers that be' and the 'nobles' defeated 'the peasantry'. This is not language which would have been readily used in the late 1840s and early 1850s when these events took place but, as a result of the quickening political currents of the 1880s, was part of the vocabulary of that decade. Further, Morrison's audience was not only the Commissioners and his fellow crofters. Through newspaper reports of the Commission's hearings he 'broadcasted' very widely.³⁰

*

In November 1882 the Irish land agitator Michael Davitt stood up to make a speech in the Music Hall in Inverness.³¹ This was a significant event and is a suitable starting point for considering the connections between the Crofters' wars and rural protests in other parts of Britain and Ireland. Davitt's Irishness is very important. The links and comparisons

³⁰ *Scotsman*, 31 May 1883, 5; see also *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 1 Jun. 1883, 4; *Dundee Courier*, 1 Jun. 1883, 4, carries an editorial arising from crofter evidence from South Uist.

³¹ *Inverness Courier*, 7 Nov. 1882.

between the politics of the land question in the Scottish highlands and Ireland have been a subject of great interest to historians over the past thirty years. Ireland, once seen simply as the inspiration of the protests in the Highlands, has begun to assume a more complex presence in our understanding of events in the Scottish highlands in the 1880s. The anti-landlord politics which Davitt seemed to represent may have been an inspiration to some but Ireland was a place of fear and dread to others: a violent and disloyal land which contained the potential to unsettle social relations, the union and even the empire.³² Alexander Nicolson, a prominent Skyeman, even went to the lengths of publishing a leaflet in Gaelic warning the inhabitants of his native island of the danger of the ‘imitating the Irish’ and making themselves the objects of ‘derision and dread’.³³ Nevertheless, the presence of Davitt in Inverness in November 1882 is important in understanding the Crofters’ War. It reminds us that although the roots of the protest were deeply embedded in nineteenth-century highland history, the crofters’ grievances were not unique but part of a British and Irish ‘land question’.

The narratives of Irish and highland history seem to run in parallel in the nineteenth century, with the famine in the 1840s followed by recovery and political protest over the land question in the 1870s and 1880s. The contemporary political connections included the work of Davitt, who also made a lengthier visit to the highlands in 1886–7. Another tangible link was through John Murdoch whose career as an exciseman had encompassed

³² James Hunter, ‘The Gaelic connection: the highlands, Ireland and nationalism, 1873 to 1922’, *SHR*, 54 (1975), 178–204; Ewen A. Cameron, ‘Communication or separation? Reactions to Irish land agitation and legislation in the highlands of Scotland, c. 1870–1910’, *English Historical Review*, 120 (2005), 633–66; Andrew G. Newby, ‘“Scotia major and Scotia minor”: Ireland and the birth of Scottish land agitation, 1878–82’, *Irish Economic and Social History*, 31 (2004), 23–40.

³³ Ewen A. Cameron and Andrew G. Newby, ‘“A Little Leaflet” by Sheriff Alexander Nicolson concerning the Crofters’ Agitation’ *Innes Review*, 55 (2004), 83–92.

both Ireland and Scotland. His remarkable newspaper, *The Highlander*, was one of the few in Scotland to report the events unfolding in Ireland in the late 1870s in a tone other than of condemnation.³⁴ There was also a clear link between the Irish land legislation of 1881 and the Crofters Act of 1886 in that they were both based on the idea of providing security of tenure to small tenants who had a history and memory of dispossession.³⁵ Nevertheless, there are also powerful contrasts: the closer link between the land question and nationalism; the greater organisation of the anti-landlord movement; the more profound anti-landlordism of Irish protests; the apparently greater violence of the Irish agitation, although here we have to be careful to not merely echo Victorian prejudices about the violent propensities of the racially inferior Irish. Advocates of violence and ‘skirmishing’ were suspicious of the conservatism of the tenantry in Ireland and land league leaders such as Davitt and William O’Brien were contemptuous of the ‘dynamiters’. Nevertheless, this is a debate which was not present in the highlands.³⁶ Even in policy and legislation there were contrasts, not least the willingness of the Irish tenant to embrace the idea of becoming an owner-occupier, whereas the Scottish crofter was strikingly unenthusiastic about this idea.

In contrast to Ireland, Welsh comparisons are neglected. This is unfortunate as there is much of interest in Welsh themes and events. As in the Irish case, to which Welsh land reformers looked, there was deep alienation between landlord and tenant. In the Welsh

³⁴ This was true from the earliest editions of that title, see *Highlander*, 16 May 1873, 6; and was sustained through to its final editions, see 16 Feb. 1881, 4.

³⁵ L. Perry Curtis Jr, *The Depiction of Eviction in Ireland, 1845–1910* (Dublin, 2011).

³⁶ Niall Whelehan, *The Dynamiters: Irish Nationalism and Political Violence in the Wider World, 1867–1900* (Cambridge, 2012), 246–74.

case this was cultural, linguistic and, most importantly, religious.³⁷ Herein lay the heart of the Welsh land question. In the area of land reform, as in so many others, Wales did not receive the same attention from Westminster as Scotland and Ireland. Although Gladstone established in 1892 a Royal Commission to examine the land question in Wales and Monmouthshire, there was no Welsh land act to go with those for Ireland in 1881 and the Scottish highlands in 1886. The fact that Welsh society had undergone a process of industrialisation and that the grievances of rural Wales existed on the periphery of a heavily industrialised economy which drew population from the countryside is significant. The theme of dispossession, common to all struggles over land, was particularly recent in Wales. After the general elections of 1859 and 1868, at which the Liberal party had triumphed among the non-conformist tenant farmers of rural Wales, there was a series of apparently politically-motivated evictions. The alleged perpetrators were English-speaking landlords adherent to the established Church of England in Wales and the victims Welsh-speaking non-conformists. This meant that the relatively small number evictions compared to Scotland and Ireland was less important than the way they were used by Welsh radical politicians, such as Henry Richard, to highlight divisions in Welsh rural society.³⁸ The next stage of the Welsh land agitation was the ‘Tithe War’ of the 1880s. This also points to some interesting comparisons with Scotland. Welsh tenant farmers of non-conformist faith objected, unsurprisingly, to the payment of taxes to support the Anglican Church in Wales. This was a Church to which they did not adhere, which was perceived as a bastion of landlordism and part of a very different cultural and

³⁷ Matthew Cragoe, “‘A contemptible mimic of the Irish’: the land question in Victorian Wales’ in Matthew Cragoe and Paul Readman (eds), *The Land Question in Britain, 1750–1914* (Basingstoke, 2010), 92–108.

³⁸ Matthew Cragoe, ‘The anatomy of an eviction campaign: the general election of 1868 in Wales and its aftermath’, *Rural History*, 9 (1998), 177–93.

moral landscape from their own chapel traditions. It was the issue of the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland which had made the 1868 election so heated in Wales. The non-conformist clergy were the leaders of the land movement in Wales in a much clearer way than Priests in Ireland or Presbyterian ministers in Highland Scotland, although both groups took a leading role in the respective protests. If the Irish case seems more intense than the agitation in highland Scotland, the Welsh land question, although very large issues of identity and culture lay behind it, was less prominent than its counterparts. The history of dispossession was on a much smaller scale and although an Anti-Tithe League was formed and led by the remarkable journalist and publisher Thomas Gee, it was not so extensive or as well organised as the Highland Land Law Reform Associations, far less the Irish Land League. Nevertheless, the existence of political debate over land questions in other parts of the British Isles and Ireland serves to remind us that the Highland land question and the Crofters Wars were part of a wider process. It would be going too far to say that this was a generic question and there were important distinctions in each case: the link between the land and national questions in Ireland and, in Wales, the way in which the land question was a component of wider religious grievances.³⁹

Davitt's Irishness, however, has the power to mislead. Although he was born in County Mayo in 1846 – the worst of times in Ireland's nineteenth century – he spent most of his life in industrial Lancashire, a common experience for the generation born amidst the famine. After an industrial accident which resulted in the loss of his arm he acquired more education than might have been expected and was sucked into the conspiratorial

³⁹ PP 1887 XXXVIII, *Report of an Inquiry as to Disturbances Connected with the Levying of Tithe Rentcharge in Wales* (C. 5195); J.P.D. Dunbabin, *Rural Discontent in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (New York, 1974), 211–31, 282–96.

politics of Irish nationalism. His activities led to his imprisonment and a further stage in the education which led him to political platforms such as that in Inverness in 1882.⁴⁰ By the time he reached the Highland capital the Irish nationalist element of his politics was less evident than his radicalism on land and social questions. This made him strikingly original in the milieu of Irish nationalism where social conservatism and economic protectionism were features of political culture. Although he chose not to emphasise the most advanced theories of land nationalisation or restoration to his audience in Inverness, the circulation of such ideas was also relevant to the way in which the Crofters' War was connected to wider debates about the land question in late Victorian Britain. Conditions in the Scottish highlands were central to these debates in a number of ways. Although the epicentre of this controversy may have been in Ireland the land question was central to exchanges about the nature of society in both rural and urban Britain in the 1880s. Although many of the ideas which were circulated by both radical critics of the current structure of landholding and the defenders of landed property were generic, the particular case of the Scottish highlands was often alluded to in these discussions. The American land reformer Henry George, whose book *Progress and Poverty* inspired radicals and alarmed defenders of property, viewed the highlands as a key example of the iniquities of private landownership. The concentration of vast acreages of land in relatively few hands, the dictatorship of landlords' estate managers, the use of extensive areas for exclusive sporting activities and the threat of capricious eviction, were all brought together in a

⁴⁰ Theodore M. Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution, 1846 to 1882* (Oxford, 1981); Laurence Marley, *Michael Davitt: Freelance Radical and Frondeur* (Dublin, 2007).

moral critique of landlordism.⁴¹ Another Victorian luminary, Alfred Russel Wallace, pioneering theorist of evolution and land reformer, shared this point of view about the land issue in the Highlands. He regarded the condition of the Highlands as an example of ‘that terrible power over their fellow creatures which absolute property in land gives to individuals who possess large estates.’⁴²

The highlands also produced the most assertive defender of the status quo: the diminutive and sanguinary eighth duke of Argyll. He had resigned in horror from Gladstone’s second administration at the passage of the Land Law (Ireland) Act of 1881 which granted security of tenure and other rights to Irish tenants. From that point he was an apostate from Liberalism. The positive contribution made to the modern economy and society by landed wealth was the main theme of his writing. The duke argued that the increment gained from privately owned land was not, as George argued, ‘unearned’, pointing to his own investments in improvements.⁴³ He was particularly exercised by George’s proposal to resume the ownership of land without compensating the landowner, regarding this as a breach of commercial principles and the level of probity which a property holder had the right to expect from the state.⁴⁴ Argyll referred to George as ‘a Preacher of Unrighteousness’ and labelled his teaching as ‘immoral’.⁴⁵ For both sides the highlands were a point of reference in the debate about the ‘land question’.

⁴¹ John R. Frame, ‘America and the Scottish left: the impact of American ideas on the Scottish labour movement from the American Civil War to World War One’, unpublished PhD thesis (University of Aberdeen, 1998), 77–118.

⁴² Alfred Russel Wallace, *Land Nationalisation. Its Necessity and its aims: Being a Comparison of the System of Landlord and Tenant with that of Occupying Ownership in their Influence on the Well-Being of the People* (London, 1882), 29.

⁴³ Argyll, ‘Prophet’, 553–5.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 546–8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 548, 557.

*

The political connection between the site of the agitation in the highlands and the centre of political decision-making in London was a feature of the Crofters' War. Newspapers helped to convey the importance of the highland land question to a wider audience and this ability to connect with public opinion had a political dimension. The politics of the county constituencies in the Highlands were dominated by landowning families – the Argylls, the Sutherlands, the Camerons of Lochiel, Sir James and Sir Alexander Matheson. This was hardly surprising prior to the mid-1880s when only a very small proportion of the population were able to vote and many of the voters had connections with the landowner through religious patronage, tenancies or direct employment. The politics of the burgh constituencies were slightly more advanced as the electorate was larger after the reform of 1868. The Inverness District of Burghs (which also included Nairn, Forres and Fortrose) elected a local solicitor and businessman, Charles Fraser Mackintosh, on quite an advanced programme in 1874 and 1880. He became known, despite his Conservative background, as the 'Member for the Highlands' and he was re-elected in 1880. He was vocal in Parliament and raised awareness of grievances around the land question and pressed for a Royal Commission to investigate these issues.⁴⁶ The limitations of the franchise in the counties, largely unreformed since 1832, meant that it was difficult to replicate these politics in the main areas populated by crofters and cottars. As far as Fraser Mackintosh received any support in Parliament it came from the Irish Parliamentary Party, enlarged and energised under the leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell after the election of 1880. The political weakness of the crofting community was

⁴⁶ Ewen A. Cameron, *The Life and Times of [Charles] Fraser Mackintosh* (Aberdeen, 2000), 65–85.

exposed at a by-election in Ross-shire in 1884. At this point there were only around 1600 electors in the county and very few crofters qualified for the vote. The election is significant for the fact that it saw the first 'Crofter candidate' take the field against Liberal and Conservative candidates from landed backgrounds. Dr Roderick MacDonald was a wealthy (as he had to be in the days before MPs received a salary) London doctor but his family background was on the island of Skye. MacDonald's candidature, on this occasion, was hopeless and he received only 248 votes against 334 for MacKenzie of Kintail (Conservative) and over 700 for Ronald Munro Ferguson of Novar who kept alive the strong Liberal tradition in Ross-shire.⁴⁷ The campaigning was also interesting due to the presence of two Irish MPs, Donald H. MacFarlane, a Scot who sat for Carlow, and Richard Power, MP for Waterford. The latter exhorted the Scottish crofters to form their own party to press their case at Westminster once reformed politics had arrived.⁴⁸

It would not have been possible to contemplate such a step had it not been for the development of the crofters' movement in the years before the extension of the franchise in 1885. Despite the fact that there had been organised protests in the 1790s and frequent incidents in the late 1840s and 1850s they lacked the coherence that became evident in the 1880s. The construction of a political movement built on informal coalitions of radicals and others who had been active in support of the crofters from the late 1870s. Although there had been a Federation of Celtic Societies in 1878 and a Skye Vigilance Committee in 1881, it was not until the formation of Highland Land Law Reform Associations in Inverness in 1882, Edinburgh and London in 1883, and a Sutherland

⁴⁷ Rob Gibson, *Crofter Power in Easter Ross: The Land League at Work, 1884–8* (Evanton, 1986), 12–13.

⁴⁸ I.M.M. MacPhail, *The Crofters' War* (Stornoway, 1989), 148–54; Andrew G. Newby, *Ireland, Radicalism and the Scottish Highlands, c. 1870–1912* (Edinburgh, 2007), 110–12

Association that significant steps were taken in this direction.⁴⁹ These organisations played a vital role: they made links between the crofters and radical politicians in urban Scotland and beyond; they funded a monthly newspaper, the *Crofter*; they provided money for ‘activists’, like John MacPherson from Glendale, to travel and speak. Most importantly, they helped to organise and inspire the crofters to give evidence to the Napier Commission. A number of the men who later became crofter MPs – Gavin B. Clark, Angus Sutherland, Roderick Macdonald – first achieved prominence through the HLLRA.⁵⁰

The cause of MacDonald and other Crofter candidates who were beginning to emerge at this point was far from hopeless in the longer term, however. High politics at Westminster were dominated by the difficult passage of reforms to the electoral system. Not only was there the prospect of huge numbers of new electors but there were also plans for a major redistribution of seats. The impact of these changes was highly significant in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, perhaps as much as any other region of the United Kingdom. The following figures bear this out to a degree but it was the behaviour of the new electors at the general elections of 1885 and 1886 which was truly significant.

⁴⁹ Hunter, *Crofting Community*, 143–5; MacPhail, *Crofters’ War*, 88–110.

⁵⁰ Newby, *Ireland, Radicalism and the Scottish Highlands*, 71–4; ODNB.

County	Electorate in 1880	Electorate in 1885	Increase (%)
Argyll	3299	10011	203.5
Caithness	1263	4320	242.0
Inverness	1851	9330	404.1
Ork & Sh	1704	7394	333.9
Ross	1664	10265	516.9
Sutherland	326	3185	877.0

The Crofter, the newspaper of the HLLRA, was adamant as to the duty of the new electors:

The first duty of the newly enfranchised people is to unite together as one man, and send into parliament men who are known to be in full sympathy with the popular cause, and who are pledged to carry out the needed legislative reforms . . . if with the representation of the Northern Constituencies now virtually in their hands, the people of the Highlands still continue to send landlords into parliament it requires but few words to show that their cause will at once become more hopeless than it ever was before.⁵¹

This advice demonstrates just how unpredictable political conditions were in mid-1885. Despite the organization of the Crofters' movement there was uncertainty as the election approached. No-one really knew how the electorate would use their newly-won rights. Would fear of the long arm of the landlord and the factor, to which John Murdoch and the

⁵¹ *The Crofter*, no. 1, March 1885.

evidence to the Napier Commission so frequently referred, manifest itself in the elections? In a number of constituencies there were candidates from or associated with landed families. Would the secrecy of the ballot be trusted by the unaccustomed voters? The leading figures in the Crofters' movement worked hard to try to allay such concerns as they travelled throughout the huge and sparsely-populated constituencies. At this point there was no separate seat for the Western Isles and the Inverness-shire seat included Skye, Harris and the islands south to Barra; Ross-shire stretched from Tarbat point in Easter Ross to the Butt of Lewis. This topographical challenge was one which the politicians had to surmount in order to be able to reach the new voters. Above all, however, it was not clear whether the Crofter candidates would prove to be attractive to the Highland electorate? We can begin to judge the answer to this question by considering the results of the 1885 general election in the highland constituencies.

County	Candidates	Votes	Share(%)	Turnout
Argyll	MacFarlane (Crf)	3340	48.6	68.6
	MacKinnon (Ind)	2856	41.6	
	McCaig (Lib)	670	9.8	
Caithness	Clark (Crf)	2110	63.4	77.0
	Sinclair (Lib)	1218	36.6	
Inverness	Fraser-Mackintosh (Crf)	3555	47.5	80.2
	MacLeod (Con)	2031	27.1	
	Mackenzie (Lib)	1897	25.4	
Ork & Sh	Lyell (Lib)	3352	63.3	71.6
	Dundas (Con)	1940	36.7	
Ross	MacDonald (Crf)	4942	62.8	76.6
	Munro-Ferguson (Lib)	2925	37.2	
Sutherland	Stafford (Lib)	1701	61.7	86.6
	Sutherland (Crf)	1058	38.3	

Colonel Fraser of Kilmuir remarked in the aftermath of the election result that he ‘feared we shall have to face unsettled times’.⁵² He was correct. Four Crofter MPs were elected: Fraser Mackintosh for Inverness, Roderick MacDonald for Ross-shire, Gavin Clark for Caithness and Donald MacFarlane for Argyll. The leading Liberal newspaper in the highlands predicted that the crofter members would achieve ‘infinitely little’ in parliament.⁵³

The crofters appeared to have shaken off the domination of the landowners and rejected them at the ballot box. There was a keen awareness of the symbolism of victory. On the island of Skye bonfires were fuelled with copies of the *Inverness Courier*, which had opposed Fraser Mackintosh. At least one such pyre was sited in full view of Dunvegan Castle, whose scion, Reginald MacLeod, had been a Conservative candidate.⁵⁴ The election also challenged the Liberalism that had dominated Scottish politics since 1832. Many highland landowning families – the Argylls, the Sutherlands, the Mathesons, the MacKenzies of Gairloch, the Sinclairs of Ulbster – were Liberal in their politics. There were Conservative landowning families – the Frasers of Lovat, the Camerons of Lochiel, the MacLeods of Dunvegan – but they were, as was Conservatism in Scotland as a whole, in the minority. The rejection of landlordism seemed to have been accompanied by a rejection of Liberalism. It could be argued that the Crofter candidates were ‘Liberal’ in all but name but that does not detract from the fact that in four constituencies Crofters had voted against the candidate with the Liberal label. This was highly unusual, even

⁵² Highland Archive, Kilmuir Estate Papers, AG/Inv/10/31.

⁵³ *Inverness Courier*, 8 Dec. 1885.

⁵⁴ *Scottish Highlander*, 18 December 1885; Sheila Kidd, ‘Burning issues: reactions to the Highland press during the 1885 election campaign’, *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 24 (2008), 285–307.

unique, in the context of the 1885 election. Clearly the crofters were not the only new voters in the United Kingdom but they were amongst the very few who chose to use their new right to vote for candidates other than those of the traditional parties who had been supported by the smaller pre-1885 electorate.⁵⁵ So far then the novelties of the election result are striking but even here continuities can be found.

The electors of Sutherland, who preferred the Marquis of Stafford to Angus Sutherland, the Crofter candidate, were condemned as a disgrace by Alexander Mackenzie in the *Scottish Highlander*, a newspaper established to advance the cause of the Crofters in the election.⁵⁶ John MacLean of Mulbuie's poem, 'Cho-dhiù Thogainn Fonn nan Gaisgeach/I would sing the Heroes' Praise', was composed in honour of the victory of Roderick MacDonald in Ross-shire but contained comments on the other crofter MPs. The controversial Dr Clark was praised as 'Truly fine gentleman' The poem concluded:

Ach gur sinne gu stàideil

Le Dotair Dòmhnallach 's MacPhàrlain

Friseal Mac-an-Tòis', an t-àrmann;

'S ann tha tàir aig muinntir Chataibh.

(How proud we can be –/with Dr MacDonald and MacFarlane,/and Fraser
Mackintosh, the hero;/the people of Sutherland are a disgrace.)⁵⁷

⁵⁵ J.P.D. Dunbabin, 'Electoral reforms and their outcome in the United Kingdom', in T.R. Gourvish and Alan O'Day (eds), *Later Victorian Britain, 1867–1900* (London, 1988), 314–15.

⁵⁶ *Scottish Highlander*, 2 Dec. 1885

⁵⁷ Meek (ed.), *Tuath is Tighearna*, 140–1, 248–9

The Sutherland election casts doubt on the interpretation of the election result as a manifestation of unambiguous anti-landlordism. Alexander Mackenzie and John MacLean deprecated the actions of the voters in Sutherland not only because they declined to support Angus Sutherland, but because the victor in the election was the marquis of Stafford, the son of the reigning duke of Sutherland. Stafford had been the member for Sutherland since 1874 but he had never spoken in Parliament and had given no prior warning of the transformation of his political image which he attempted in the run up to the 1885 election. In short, he tried to present himself as a friend of the crofter through parliamentary support for land reform and, much to their annoyance, pestering his father's estate managers to deal with the grievances of individual crofters. In some quarters this was seen as blatant opportunism by Stafford when he was faced with the prospect of having to compete with a crofters' son for what had been a sinecure. His victory can be explained by a number of features: the power of the estate management to influence the election in subtle ways; lingering deference towards the marquis and the duke; and, perhaps crucially, the intervention of the powerful Free Church clergy who were worried about the radical policies of land restoration espoused by Angus Sutherland.⁵⁸

The *Scotsman* remarked that the 'crofters, unfortunately have been deluded with promises of nearly everything they desire, from "three acres and a cow" to the right to catch the

⁵⁸ Newby, *Ireland, Radicalism and the Scottish Highlands*, 125–37; MacColl, *Land, Faith and the Crofting Community*, 163–9; Annie Tindley, *The Sutherland Estate, 1850–1920* (Edinburgh, 2010), 80–7.

best salmon that swim in river or sea'.⁵⁹ In fact, the Crofter Candidates stood on the programme of the HLLRA adopted at its conference at Dingwall in 1884. The 'manifesto' of the Crofter MPs was fairly conservative, although Clark and Sutherland were interested in more radical ideas. The notion of restoring the people to the land taken from them during the clearances was much less challenging than radical ideas for a complete abolition of landownership, either through the notion of a 'single tax' on land, proposed by Henry George, or the developing ideas of state-ownership of land emerging from the nascent Labour movement. In time the moderate proposals of the Crofter MPs were more fully realised than more adventurous programmes. The demands of the Crofter MPs went beyond the proposals of the government, which revolved around the idea of fixity, or security, of tenure and fair rent. This gave the crofters slightly better conditions on their existing land, but did little to address their principal grievance: shortage of land.

The 1886 election was largely fought out over the issue of Irish Home Rule, a question of imperial importance. In the highlands the Crofter candidates had a slightly easier time of it as the Liberal party, cannily and as the first step towards reabsorbing the Crofter MPs, chose not to oppose them. Most candidates supported, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, Irish self-government but Charles Fraser Mackintosh qualified his Crofter candidacy with a Unionist caveat. The Sutherland crofters expunged the disgrace of 1885 by electing Angus Sutherland in the absence of the marquis, who declared himself horrified by Irish home rule and declined to stand. The results are summarised in the following table.

⁵⁹ *Scotsman*, 7, 12 Dec. 1885.

County	Candidate	Votes	Share (%)	Turnout
Argyll	Malcolm (Con)	3658	54.6	67.0
	MacFarlane (Crf)	3045	45.4	
Caithness	Clark (Crf)	2034	77.7	60.6
	Niven (LU)	584	22.3	
Inverness	Fraser-Mackintosh (Crf/LU)	Unopposed		
Ork & Sh	Lyell (L)	2353	63.0	50.5
	Younger (LU)	1382	37.0	
Ross	MacDonald (Crf)	4263	78.1	53.2
	Grant (LU)	1197	21.9	
Sutherland	Sutherland (Crf)	1463	71.5	64.2
	Fullarton (LU)	583	28.5	

As can be seen, the turnout was much lower, reflecting the reduced level of intensity compared to 1885 and there were a series of facile victories for Crofters in the absence of Liberal opposition. The blight on the political landscape, however, was the result in Argyll. Donald MacFarlane, formerly an Irish MP, who had been victorious in 1885 was defeated by a Conservative landlord, Colonel Malcolm of Poltalloch. This contest was fought out in an atmosphere coloured by religious controversy. MacFarlane was treated with some suspicion because he was a Roman Catholic (in Ireland he was not fully trusted because he was a convert!) and was attacked by the Presbyterian clergy and through the medium of Gaelic poetry. Where the 1885 election had been intensely focussed on the land question the debate over Irish home rule brought out other

prejudices, including anti-Catholicism. This view was expressed in biting Gaelic poetry directed against MacFarlane. The author has been identified tentatively as Rev Neil Taylor, a Free Church minister in Dornoch, Sutherland. There was nothing tentative about his polemic, ‘Oran na h-Election/Song on the Election’, which was, significantly, published in a Conservative newspaper, the *Northern Chronicle* of Inverness.

Buaidh is piseach gu bràth do
Earraghàidheal nan gaisgeach;
Chuir iad cùl ri MacPhàrlain,
Ris a’ Phàpa ri Gladstone;
Chuir iad cùl ris na gairlaich –
Gilleann Phàrnell – ‘s rin cleachdadh;
Tha I nis mar bu dual dhi
A’ togail suas na gorm-bhrataich –

An Union Jack.

(May success and prosperity for ever attend/Argyllshire of the [many]
heroes;/they turned their backs on MacFarlane,/on the Pope and on
Gladstone;/they turned their backs on the wretches –
Parnell’s lads – and their habits;/The constituency is now as was
customary/Raising high the blue banner –/ the Union Jack.)⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Meek (ed.), *Tuath is Tighearna*, 149, 253; for wider background on this fascinating and, to an extent, discordant poem see, Donald E. Meek, ‘The Catholic knight of crofting: Sir Donald Horne MacFarlane, MP for Argyll, 1885–86, 1892–95’, *TGSI*, 58 (1992–4), **pages**.

This was something of a caricature of MacFarlane. He had scarcely been in the van of Irish nationalism and he was not especially keen to lower the Union Jack, being in favour of a modified system of home rule with elements of federalism. In fact, in an election speech in 1885 he declared himself to be in favour of ‘as much home rule as is consistent with the integrity of the United Kingdom and of all the other just claims of Ireland’.⁶¹ In the heated atmosphere of 1886, however, this was insufficient to prevent his opponents from using his Irish connections against him.

*

The events of the 1880s also brought the highlands into greater political visibility. This is not to accept uncritically the idea that the region was peripheral or marginal prior to that date. Symbols of the region, although often constructed by outsiders or elites, were prominent in projections of Scottishness in the nineteenth century. The appropriation of images and symbols of the region associated with the visit, carefully stage-managed by Walter Scott, of George IV to Edinburgh in 1822 has been seen as the culmination of the ‘rehabilitation’ of the highlander in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.⁶² The beginning of Queen Victoria’s engagement with the highlands on her visit of 1842 is in some ways as significant as the 1822 jamboree.⁶³ The development in the same period of highland regiments in the British army provided another venue for what some writers have called

⁶¹ *Oban Times*, 5 Sep. 1885; see also an earlier pamphlet by MacFarlane, *Ireland versus England* (London, 1880).

⁶² Robert D. Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero: The Image of the Highlander, 1745–1830* (Edinburgh, 1995); John Prebble, *The King’s Jaunt* (London, 1988); see also the essays in D. Broun and M. Macgregor (eds), *Mìorun Mor nan Gall, The Great Ill-Will of the Lowlander: Lowland Perceptions of the Scottish Highlands* (Glasgow, 2009).

⁶³ Alex Tyrrell, ‘The queen’s “little trip”: the royal visit to Scotland in 1842’, *Scottish Historical Review*, 82 (2003), 47–73.

‘highlandism’, but this was a theme which was fading in the late nineteenth century as the Scottishness of the army declined and difficulties were encountered in recruiting soldiers from the highlands.⁶⁴ Given the decline of highland militarism by the 1880s it is striking that the state had to deploy the military to deal with the protests in a region which was once a fertile recruiting ground. The armed forces could only be used in support of the civil power but there were many occasions in the 1880s in which they were used in this way from the despatch of marines to arrest the Glendale crofters in 1882 to reading of the riot act at Galson in 1888.⁶⁵ An important reason for frequent use of the military in the highlands was the weakness of the civil power in the shape of the county police forces which were underfunded and undermanned. On many occasions, including at Braes in 1882, highland forces required reinforcements from lowland constabularies, such as Glasgow and Aberdeen. A further impetus for military involvement was the character of the Sheriff of Inverness, William Ivory. So insistent were his demands to national politicians for military support of the civil power that they became intensely irritated with him. Arthur Balfour and his colleagues referred to him in a derisive manner as ‘Poo-Ba’.⁶⁶ Ivory was a self-important figure who relished the leadership of the major military expeditions to Skye in 1884–5 and 1886. On the latter occasion he even had a medal struck at his own expense and awarded to the policemen who arrested a leading agitator, Norman Stewart (alias ‘Parnell’) of

⁶⁴ Andrew MacKillop, *‘More Fruitful than the Soil’: Army, Empire and the Scottish Highlands, 1715 to 1815* (Edinburgh, 2000).

⁶⁵ I.M.M. MacPhail, ‘The Skye military expedition of 1884–5’, *TGSI*, 48 (1972–4), 62–94; I.M.M. MacPhail, ‘Gunboats to the Hebrides’, *TGSI*, 53 (1982–4), 542–52; Cameron, ‘Internal policing and public order, c. 1797–1900’, 447–53.

⁶⁶ NRS, HH1/58, Arthur Balfour to William Ivory, 6 Oct. 1886.

Valtos in Skye.⁶⁷ Ivory's character presented Gaelic poets with wonderful material for satire and excoriation, especially Mhari Mhor's 'Oran Cumha an Ibhirich', which is in the form of an elegy and does not mince its words, referring to Ivory as a 'Mun t-Siochaire lom' ('mean coward') and a 'Chuir i 'n Siochaire maol' ('bald-pated coward').⁶⁸

As well soldiers the crofters' protests also brought journalists and illustrators who produced highland scenes in words and pictures for readers of the *Graphic* and the *Illustrated London News*, some of which were at odds with the romantic images which had become so well-known over the course of the nineteenth century. These images – paintings by Turner, Horatio McCulloch or Edwin Landseer, for example – prioritised the historical sites, fauna and landscape of the highlands over the people who lived there. Recent work on these images demonstrates that the *Graphic* was inclined to the picturesque in its choice of views. The very widely read *Illustrated London News*, although critical of illegal action by crofters, hinted at social commentary with portrayals of the interior of crofters' houses juxtaposed with images such as Dunvegan Castle or shooting lodges on Lewis.⁶⁹

There were, however, new and different ways in which the highlands impinged on the public consciousness. The first related to tourism and sport. Inverness was reached by a direct railway route from the south in 1863 and by the 1880s there was

⁶⁷ NRS, HH1/161, Ivory to Balfour, 16 Dec. 1886.

⁶⁸ Meek, *Tuath is Tighearna*, 167–9, 267–8.

⁶⁹ Anne MacLeod, 'The Highland landscape: visual depictions, 1760–1883' in Broun and MacGregor (eds), *Mìorun Mòr nan Gal*, 128–57; Martin Padget, *Photographers of the Western Isles* (Edinburgh, 2010), 62–85.

quite an extensive railway network which reached into the highlands beyond Inverness to Strome Ferry and Fort William with later extensions to the coast at Kyle of Lochalsh and Mallaig.⁷⁰ This helped to facilitate the expansion of sporting estates in the highlands which in turn brought substantial business to the railway companies: on 11 September 1888 a thirty-six-carriage train left Perth at 7.50am bound for Inverness laden with sportsmen and their equipment.⁷¹ George Earl's painting *Perth Station, coming South* shows the sportsmen on their way home with the trophies of the hunt.⁷² Gaelic phrase books had special sections for the vocabulary required for the shooting season, including 'mharbh mi damh donn' ('I killed a stag') and 'Cia meud meur tha rair a'cha-bar' ('how many tines are on the antler').⁷³ Most of the sport in the highlands was deer stalking but from the middle of the nineteenth century grouse moors became more numerous. The patronage of such estates by political and economic elites as tenants and their guests helped to integrate the highland landscape, or a particular conception of it, with the mental landscapes of these groups. This was topped by royal patronage of the sport from the Victorian period, with the future Edward VII a particularly keen participant.⁷⁴ The elite also helped to romanticise deer stalking and its effect on the landscape through their commissions to Sir Edwin Landseer, who abandoned his earlier

⁷⁰ John McGregor, *The West Highland Railway: Plans, Politics and People* (East Linton, 2005).

⁷¹ Alistair J. Durie, "'Unconscious benefactors': grouse-shooting in Scotland, 1780–1914", *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 15 (1998), 65.

⁷² Reproduced in P.J.G. Ransom, *Iron Road: The Railway in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2007), 92–3.

⁷³ Mary MacKellar, *The Tourist's Hand-book of Gaelic and English Phrases for the Highlands* (Edinburgh, **date**), 13–14, this book was dedicated to Lady Cameron of Lochiel.

⁷⁴ Antony Taylor, "'Pig-sticking princes': Royal hunting, moral outrage, and the republican opposition to animal abuse in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Britain", *History*, 89 (2004), 30–48; Alistair J. Durie, 'Game shooting: an elite sport, c. 1870–1980', *Sport in History*, 28 (2008), 431–49.

interest in the people of the highlands to concentrate on the animal which by the 1880s symbolised their displacement: the red deer.⁷⁵

Occasionally this obsession with sport could have tragic consequences. In September 1886 while hunting in the hills above Loch Arkaig on the estate of his uncle, Cameron of Locheil, the earl of Dalkeith (eldest son of the 6th duke of Buccleuch) slipped while in downhill pursuit of a wounded stag; his gun struck a rock and discharged, fatally wounding its owner who bled to death on the remote hillside in the company of two local ghillies, John Cameron and John Macdonald. Dalkeith was an archetypal representative of the sporting elite: a noted cricketer but also a politician, having been the unsuccessful Conservative candidate in Dumfriesshire at the general election of 1885.⁷⁶ The Dalkeith tragedy in Lochaber was one among the established sporting elite but the expansion of deer forests and grouse moors in the highlands attracted new money as well and its representatives often paid less attention to the invented traditions of the sport. The most extreme example of this invading force was an American businessman, W.L. Winans. He acquired ownership or tenancy of over 200,000 acres of land in the central highlands stretching from Kintail almost to the east coast. His determination to exclude crofters from his land was notable, even to the extent of initiating litigation against Murdoch Macrae, a crofter who allowed a pet lamb to stray onto his land.⁷⁷ His favoured hunting tactic was to organise teams of ghillies to drive deer into narrow

⁷⁵ Richard Ormond, *The Monarch of the Glen: Landseer in the Highlands* (Edinburgh, 2005), 107–28.

⁷⁶ *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 20 Sep. 1886, 5.

⁷⁷ *Glasgow Herald*, 3 Jun. 1885, 9.

passes where they would be mown down with modern firearms: an undignified corruption of the medieval tinchel.⁷⁸

The fact that many leading politicians were keen sportsmen meant that the highlands were familiar territory to many of them as they travelled north in August in pursuit of contrived solitude in the deer forests. This may have helped to make the political debate on the future of the highlands more relevant to the political class but it also provided excellent material for a powerful critique of the landed system upon which such sport was based. This was also evident beyond the highlands as the following editorial from a leading radical newspaper in London makes clear:

We are evidently on the brink of hostilities in the far North. Every train to Scotland is heavily laden with its cargo of guns, ammunition, and provisions of all kinds; and every evening there is a busy scene at Euston Square and King's Cross, at the time of the night express... The jaded statesmen, who have done so much benefit to the English people in their late Parliamentary labours, the "mashers" and "men about town" who naturally need some recreation after the exhausting duties of a London season, all these useful members of society are now off to Scotland to shoot grouse. It is right and proper that after much idling they should do a little killing.

⁷⁸ Willie Orr, *Deer Forests, Landlords and Crofters: The Western Highlands in Victorian and Edwardian Times* (Edinburgh, 1982), 42.

The sardonic article finished on a more political note: 'The Highlands are not yet a paradise, even under a beneficent English rule; indeed a very clear proof of the contrary may be seen in the annual incursion of English sportsmen and the annual exodus of dispossessed Scottish crofters.'⁷⁹ The juxtaposition of sport and clearance is an interesting one. It has been established by modern research that the massive expansion of deer forests in the Victorian period did not lead in a direct manner to the eviction of crofters, as had been the case with the expansion of sheep farms earlier in the century. Nevertheless, the appropriation of land for an exclusive sporting activity was an affront to those who believed that the land of the highlands could support a larger population. Deer forests were marketed as being devoid of people: 'no crofters' was a positive attraction to which estate agents drew the attention of potential clients.

Advocates of deer forests, including landowners who sought to rent them out, such as Edward Ellice of Invergarry, and their factors, such as the vocal and articulate George Malcolm, argued that they provided employment and business for shops and merchants in the highlands. In addition, they argued, the land which was used was at altitude and could not be used for arable or pastoral agriculture. In their eyes, sport was a way of exploiting land which was, otherwise, of no economic value.⁸⁰ This case did not go unanswered. The debate over commercialized sport highlighted the key issues of the decade as it raised questions of 'the flouting of immemorial rights of access, the violation of the sanctity of the small property holder and a contempt for the rural poor'.⁸¹ Refutation of the supposed benefits of deer forests was a key element of the rhetoric of the crofters'

⁷⁹'The War in the North', *Justice*, 18 Aug. 1885.

⁸⁰ George Malcolm, *Population, Crofts, Sheep Walks and Deer Forests* (Edinburgh, 1883)

⁸¹ Taylor, "'Pig-sticking princes'", 40–1

movement. They argued that the deer encroached on land which could be used for grazing and to support a greater population and the economic benefits of deer forests – jobs, expenditure by tenants and their guests – were denied. The annual conferences of the Highland Land Law Reform Association at Dingwall in 1884 and Portree in 1885 voiced criticisms of the expansion of deer forests. The essence of the argument in the highlands in the 1880s was about access to land and the assertion of that the crofting community were unjustly excluded from lands to which they had rights and that were now devoted to sheep and, more particularly by the 1880s, deer. Indeed, it could be said that the Crofters' War was book-ended by disputes arising from the expansion of sport: the evictions at Leckmelm in 1879 and the raid at the Park deer forest in November 1887.

Legislation

One of the principal reasons why historians have focused on the protests of the 1880s is that they produced a positive legislative result for the crofters.⁸² Even the nomenclature of the undoubtedly important act of 1886 is revealing: the official title is the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act but it became known as 'the crofters' act'. Thus a piece of legislation to govern the nature of tenure on particular pieces of land became, and endured in the popular mind, as an act to protect the crofters themselves. The survival of the principles of the act – in law and popular perception – is significant but the way in which it drew on the past is also important. The form of the act emerged from the interplay between high politics and popular politics across the United Kingdom in the 1880s. The popular element was the protests, which stimulated government to act. Governments of the 1880s were not keen to legislate and highland landowners wanted to

⁸² James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh, 1976), 162

avoid parliamentary action that would constrain their relations with their tenants. Not used to acting corporately, and encompassing great political diversity among their number, they nevertheless met in Inverness in early 1885 to try to come up with a voluntary code that would appease both crofters and government. This was never likely to be effective and nothing meaningful came of the conference, largely organized by Cameron of Lochiel, the Conservative MP for Inverness-shire, and R.C. Munro Ferguson, the Liberal MP for Ross-shire.⁸³ As the agitation in the crofting areas intensified and the crofters became more organized, the government was left with little option but to try to act. It is often asserted that the report of the Napier commission of 1884 ‘led to’ the Crofters Act of 1886. This was not so. Napier produced a fascinating essay in land tenure in the central section of his Report but its central recommendation – the recreation of the crofting township as a self-regulating body – was impractical, or at least the Liberal ministers of the day thought so.⁸⁴ Attacked by a range of political forces, including the duke of Argyll, Napier conducted a vigorous defence of his brainchild and reasserted the importance of attachment to the land for cultural reasons.⁸⁵ Fortunately, the government had another model to turn to in the shape of the Land Law (Ireland) Act of 1881.⁸⁶ They refashioned this for the conditions of the Scottish highlands. The Irish Act had granted fixity of tenure as well as the right to have a fair rent set by a land court and gave tenants the right to free sale of the interest in their holdings. The third of these provisions was not relevant to the highlands, where there was no equivalent of the Irish market in tenancies,

⁸³ ‘Conference of Landlords at Inverness’, *TGSI*, xi (1884–5), 134–6; ‘Landlord resolutions at Inverness’, *Celtic Magazine*, March 1885, 113.

⁸⁴ British Library, Add Mss, 44547, f. 109, W.E. Gladstone to W.H. Gladstone, 14 Sep 1884; Achnacarry Castle Mss, Lochiel to Harcourt, 20 Dec. 1884.

⁸⁵ George Douglas Campbell, eighth duke of Argyll, ‘A corrected picture of the highlands’, *Nineteenth Century*, xvi (1884) 681–701; Lord Napier, ‘The Highland crofters: a vindication of the report of the Crofters Commission’, *Nineteenth Century*, xvii (1885), 437–63.

⁸⁶ TNA, CAB37/14 ff. 173–4, Gladstone to Harcourt, 19 Jan. 1885.

but the first two were readily translated. These ideas survived through 1885 and 1886 as the Liberals tried to legislate in this area, their first attempt to do so failed as they lost office in mid-1885 but their second attempt was successful after they returned to power in January 1886.⁸⁷ The principal problem which the government faced was in trying to find a way to legislate for the crofters but to ensure that it did not affect the lowlands where tenants had a more formal relationship with landlords through complex leases and where agriculture was more sophisticated, productive and capital intensive. This process was conducted at the highest level of politics, specifically in correspondence between the Prime Minister, Gladstone, and the Home Secretary, Harcourt. The past was crucial in this discussion. Gladstone was widely read in the history of the highlands and was aware of the traumas of the clearances and there is evidence that his motivation was to atone for this history.⁸⁸ He was also aware of the ancestral rights of the crofters and influenced by those who saw a parallel in rural India where such rights were recognized.⁸⁹ Gladstone argued that rights of security of tenure and access to a land court to have fair rents set should be extended to areas of the highlands where it could be demonstrated that communal grazing rights had been in use in the past eighty years. An act granting these rights was passed in June 1886 and a land court called the Crofters Commission was established. While heralded a new phase in the history of the highlands in that eviction and threatened eviction was no longer possible, it also had significant weaknesses. The principal limitation of the act was that it contained only circumscribed provisions to make

⁸⁷ Cameron, *Land for the People?*, 31–8; Hunter, *Crofting Community*, 161–3.

⁸⁸ TNA: PRO, CAB37/14/173–4, Gladstone to Harcourt, 19 Jan. 1885.

⁸⁹ C. Dewey, 'Celtic Agrarian Legislation and the Celtic Revival: Historicist Implications of Gladstone's Irish and Scottish Land Acts 1870–1886', *Past and Present*, 64 (August 1974), 30–70; C. Dewey, 'Images of the Village Community: A Study in Anglo-Indian Ideology', *Modern Asian Studies*, 6 (1972), 291–328; J. Shaw, 'Land, people and nation: historicist voices in the Highland land campaign, c. 1850–1883', in E.F. Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship and community: Liberals, radicals and collective identities in the British Isles, 1865–1931* (Cambridge, 1996), 305–324

more land available to the crofters. It was this which led one of the crofter MPs to call it a ‘miserable, deluded rubbishy measure’.⁹⁰ Further, a Gaelic poet from Wester Ross sang the following at a crofters’ meeting at Lochcarron in March 1886:

‘S cha bhi [sinn] strìochdte a Bhile

Thug an *government* an àird;

Chan eil stiall ann airson criomag

Anns an cuireadh duine bàrr;

‘S e tha sinn ‘g iarraidh ionad

Sam biodh ionaltradh nam bà,

‘S an talamh ìosal airson mine

Don a’ghinealaich tha fàs.

We will not submit to the Bill/that the government has introduced;/it says nothing about a patch/where a man could plant a crop; what we want is a place/where cows could find a grazing/and the low land to produce meal/for the growing generation.⁹¹

In time there were more positive responses to the 1886 Act as the wider implications of security of tenure began to become evident. In his poem ‘Eilean na-h-Òige’, Fr Allan McDonald presented an optimistic and contented image of the island of Eriskay, the basis of which was the Crofters Act:

⁹⁰

⁹¹ Meek (ed.), *Tuath is Tighearna*, 154, 257.

Bho chionn fhada chuir gach madadh

Chluinneadh fead à Ghòrdain

Mach ri cladach feara gasta

Mar bhiodh baidean ògan –

Cha robh ‘n tac ‘n lagh sin again

Dhianadh tagrach coir dhuinn,

Ach se theasraig sinn am Freastal

‘S chuir gu’r leas an fhòirneirt

Long ago each savage hound/That heard the Gordon’s whistle/Drove splendid men to the edge of the shore/Like lambs being rounded up –/We did not then possess that law/Which would process our just claim/But providence has come to our rescue/And turned oppression to our gain.⁹²

Indeed, Fr McDonald himself benefited from another event which would have been unlikely to have occurred prior to 1886: the School Board election in South Uist in 1888. From the Education (Scotland) Act of 1872 elected School Boards had been established to administer educational matters in each parish. The franchise was broadly defined and women could vote, so there was potential for change to be effected through this structure. On the Gordon Cathcart estate in South Uist, however, tension increased as the largely Catholic tenants felt insufficiently secure to vote for their preferred candidates, prominent amongst whom were the local Priests, including Fr McDonald. The School Board, in turn, did not select Catholic teachers for the parochial schools in the island. This had been

⁹² Ronald Black (ed.), *Eilein na h-Òige: The Poems of Fr Allan McDonald* (Glasgow, 2002), 37, 184–5.

an issue in the evidence of Bishop Angus Macdonald and Fr Angus MacKintosh to the Napier Commission in 1883. Until the first post-1886 election the South Uist School Board was dominated by the Protestant clergy despite the fact that the vast majority of the population was of the Catholic faith. The security of tenure provided by the 1886 Crofters Act created the conditions where the Catholic crofters felt sufficiently confident to vote according to their views, in the knowledge that a significant coercive weapon of the estate management had been blunted.⁹³

In the longer term, however, the failure of the act to deal with the fundamental issue of land hunger and the expectations engendered by the debate that led to its passage, ensured that the agitation did not cease in the summer of 1886. Indeed, by some measures it intensified. The island of Tiree saw a significant protest that involved a breach in the ranks of the HLLRA as one of its leading members accepted land from which another had been evicted. The dispatch of troops by the new Conservative Secretary for Scotland, Arthur Balfour, and the arrest and trial of the protesters ensured that the incident became a *cause celebre* in radical circles in Scotland, many of whom petitioned the government for their release.⁹⁴ Farcical vents ensued on the west coast of Sutherland. Attempts to arrest Hugh Kerr, a troublesome crofter who had been involved in a land raid at Clashmore farm, were confounded as he took to the hills and could not be apprehended

⁹³ John Lorne Campbell, *Fr Allan McDonald of Eriskay, 1859–1905: Priest, Poet and Folklorist* (Edinburgh, 1954), 10–11.

⁹⁴ A range of these representations can be found at NRS, HH1/285, 287, 288, 289, 290, 292, 293, 295, 299, 303.

despite the attention of a force of police and marines. In events faintly reminiscent of the ‘Prince in the Heather’ after Culloden he remained at large for eighteen months!⁹⁵

The focus of the crofters’ protests prior to the act had been on the island of Skye. After its passage there was a shift to the congested island of Lewis where there was a large class of landless cottars, whose problems were almost entirely ignored by the 1886 Act. A large-scale land raid on the Pairc Deer Forest in the Lochs area of Lewis in November 1887 alerted the authorities to this development.⁹⁶ A heavy-handed attempt to clobber the raiders backfired when they were acquitted by the High Court in Edinburgh of the very serious charge of mobbing and rioting. There was little chance of sustaining this charge after it had emerged that some of the raiders had shared a picnic lunch with the tenant’s shooting party!⁹⁷ This gave encouragement to protesters in Lewis who organized further events at Aignish and Galson near Stornoway. These events occasioned yet another deployment of marines in support of the civil power exercised by the Sheriff and a more effective legal response which led to convictions of a number of protestors. The sentences handed down on these occasions, combined with an upturn in the returns from fishing and other sources of income from temporary migration, resulted in diminished agitation. These events in Lewis were the last large-scale protests of the 1880s.⁹⁸

Despite the weaknesses of the 1886 Act its principles endured and provided the framework for all subsequent political and legal debates about crofting. Subsequent

⁹⁵ See NRS, HH1/917; the context is fully discussed by Tindley, *Sutherland Estate*, 149–61.

⁹⁶ There is a collection of documents on the raid at NRS, AF67/35.

⁹⁷ *Glasgow Herald*, 18 Jan. 1888.

⁹⁸ Police Reports (which had tended not to downplay agitation) from a variety of insular locations indicate the release of pressure in this period, see NRS, AF67/95–8

legislation of 1911 and, more importantly, 1919, provided means by which land could be redistributed to crofters and ensured that security of tenure remained vital to the crofting community. In the 1950s and 1960s when suggestions for reform of crofting were advanced, the essentials of the 1886 act were defended with vigour. When a later Commission of Enquiry in Crofting Conditions reached Lewis in 1952 its members were greeted with demonstrators with placard reading 'hands off the crofters Act'.⁹⁹ The act is also very important in the development of the highlands because it was an important foundation of the notion that the region merited special treatment by government, a theme which recurred.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ James Hunter, *The Claim of Crofting: The Scottish Highlands and Islands, 1930–1990* (Edinburgh, 1991), 79

¹⁰⁰ Ewen A. Cameron, 'The Scottish highlands as a special policy area, 1886 to 1965', *Rural History*, 8 (1997), 195–215.

Chapter Two.

Land and Politics.

Issues concerned with the ownership of, access to and redistribution of land have remained important in Scotland to a greater extent than in other parts of the United Kingdom.¹⁰¹ The politics of the land question, often considered to be exclusively relevant to rural Scotland, are reflected in many areas of Scottish cultural life despite the fact that modern Scottish history is of an urban industrial nation.¹⁰² Significant works of twentieth century Scottish literature, in both Gaelic and English, are concerned with the histories and geographies, communities and places, grievances and aspirations, associated with land.¹⁰³ Even more particularly, the period of the clearances and the Crofters' War of the 1880s are prominent in this body of work. Even for those critics who perceived weakness in the Gaelic poetry of the nineteenth century as a result of the triumph of the landlords during the clearance period, the protests of the 1880s represented a turning point, both culturally and politically. Recent scholarship has sought to rehabilitate the political content of nineteenth-century poetry related to the land question. These works might be seen as part of a wider cultural response to the intense issues thrown up by the land

¹⁰¹ Ewen A. Cameron, 'Setting the heather on fire: the land question in Scotland', in Matthew Cragoe and Paul Readman (eds), *The Land Question in Britain* (Basingstoke, 2010), 109–25; Ewen A. Cameron, 'Unfinished Business: The Land Question and the New Scottish Parliament', *Contemporary British History*, 15 (2001), 83–114.

¹⁰² Andrew Noble, 'Urbane silence: Scottish writing and the nineteenth-century city', in George Gordon (ed.), *Perspectives of the Scottish City* (Aberdeen, 1985), 64.

¹⁰³ This can be clearly seen in George Bruce and Frank Rennie (eds), *The Land Out There: A Scottish Land Anthology* (Aberdeen, 1991); C. W. J. Withers, "'The Image of the Land': Scotland's Geography through her languages and Literature', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 100 (1984), 81–95; David McCrone, 'Land, Democracy and Culture in Scotland', *Scottish Affairs*, No. 23 (Spring 1998), 73–92.

question, although to suggest a similarity with ‘anti-colonial literature’ seems an exaggeration.¹⁰⁴

This engagement with the history of the land question continues throughout the twentieth century. It is evident in the work of Aonghas MacNeacail, especially in his poem ‘oideachadh ceart’ (A proper schooling). In this poem MacNeacail asserts that the series of incidents from the life of the township of Idrigill, Uig, Skye, that he recounts are not events from history but part of the memory of the township: they are alive and connected to the present, rather than being past and archived. The phrase ‘cha b’eachdraidh ach cuimhe’ (it wasn’t history but memory’) is repeated throughout the poem. The incidents themselves are all related to the relations between the owners of the land, both private and public at different times in this area of Skye, and culminate in a section dealing with the protests over the farm of Scuddaburgh that took place in 1910–11 by which time the land was state-owned.¹⁰⁵ In his notes to the poem MacNeacail makes an interesting point when he remarks, correctly, ‘no Scot from croft or tenement, needs to be told that the factor is the landlord’s agent or rent-collector’, thereby linking the rural and urban element of the politics of property relations and conflict. The ‘factor’ was the subject of opprobrium in urban Scotland, not least during the rent strikes which took place in 1915. There are some interesting parallels between these events and the crofters’ protests of the 1880s: the weak tenurial position of the tenant, attitudes to landlords and factors (who

¹⁰⁴ Samuel MacLean, ‘The Poetry of the Clearances’, *TGSI*, 38 (1937–41), 293–324; Meek, *Tuath is Tighearna*, 13–40; Silke Stroh, *Uneasy Subjects: Postcolonialism and Scottish Gaelic Poetry* (Amsterdam, 2011), 214–32.

¹⁰⁵ Aonghas MacNeacail, *dènamh gàire ris ‘chloc, dàin ùra agus thagte: laughing at the clock, new and selected poems* (Edinburgh, 2012), 162–5; for the events at Scuddaburgh see Donald Shaw, *The Idrigill Raiders* (Ullapool, 2010); Ewen A. Cameron, “‘They Will Listen to no Remonstrance’: Land Raids and Land Raiders in the Scottish Highlands, 1886 to 1914’, *Scottish Economic and Social History*, 17 (1997), 43–64.

were burnt in effigy) and the use of the rent strike as a means of protest. These urban protests also resulted in a partial victory for the tenants in the shape of legislation of late 1915 which controlled their rents for the duration of the war.¹⁰⁶ Some of the most vociferous protests took place in Govan and Partick, areas of Glasgow of notable highland settlement, and it is likely that some people would have had an awareness of the crofters' protests of the 1880s.

Perhaps the most sustained piece of writing to explore themes relating to the wider social and cultural impact of the land question is Sorley MacLean's extended poem 'An Cuilithionn'. This poem attempts to relate the history of the island of Skye to themes in European and global history in the 1930s, the period in which most of the poem was written, although it was not published until the 1980s.¹⁰⁷ MacLean left his teaching post in Portree in 1937 and taught in Mull, where he became 'obsessed with the clearances', in 1938. He was also concerned about the approach of another European conflict and the composition was strongly influenced by the Marxist ideas which were a powerful influence on his work at this time. The clearances and the crofters' response in the 1880s are at the centre of the Skye history from which themes of global relevance emanated. The almost banal pervasiveness of clearance history and culture is commented on by Christopher Whyte:

¹⁰⁶ Ewen A. Cameron, 'Civil Society, Protest and Parliament: Housing and Land in Modern Scotland', in H. T. Dickinson and M. Lynch (eds), *The Challenge to Westminster: Sovereignty, Devolution and Independence* (East Linton, 2000), 123–32; Joe Melling, *Rent Strikes: People's Struggle for Housing in West Scotland, 1890–1916* (Edinburgh, 1983).

¹⁰⁷ Christopher Whyte (ed.), *Somhairle MacGill-Eain/Sorley MacLean, An Cuilithionn 1939 and Unpublished Poems* (Glasgow, 2011).

MacLean chose to tackle what was the most hackneyed subject in Gaelic poetry, the eviction of the Gaelic-speaking peasantry from what had for centuries been their homelands in the north and west of Scotland. Barely a songmaker in the hundred years preceding, no matter how mediocre, had failed to try his or her hand at what must have appeared to be an obligatory theme. MacLean's boldness, even rashness, in choosing to deal with it yet again, but using modes which cast it in an entirely new light, in terms of both politics and literature, must not be underestimated.¹⁰⁸

One of MacLean's trenchant criticisms of nineteenth-century Gaelic poetry was the 'absurd tendency to blame the factor more than the landlord' and the extent to which some poets, even Mhari Mhor, were unwilling to admit that people from within Gaeldom were responsible for the clearances: 'she attacked the English for their doings in Skye, although it was plain that not one Clearance had been made in Skye by anyone who had not a name as Gaelic as her own'.¹⁰⁹ *An Cuilithionn* worked from a deep knowledge of the perpetrators of clearance to articulate a comprehensive condemnation of landlords, and their lackeys, as well as tacksmen, factors, shepherds and others from the Gaidhealtachd and beyond.¹¹⁰ MacLean's detailed knowledge of the history of Skye came from the oral traditions passed down through his family. The richness of this tradition can also be seen in the work of his maternal uncle, Alexander Nicolson, lecturer in Gaelic at Jordanhill College in Glasgow. He published a history of Skye in 1930 and it contains an uncompromising account of the clearances. He also included some of this material in a

¹⁰⁸ Whyte, (ed.), *An Cuilithionn* 1939, 4.

¹⁰⁹ MacLean, 'Poetry of the clearances', 296, 319.

¹¹⁰ Whyte, (ed.), *An Cuilithionn* 1939, 40–3, 150–4; MacKay, *Sorley MacLean*, 108–9.

widely-read tourist guidebook to the island.¹¹¹ MacLean's great poem was written at the height of the Scottish literary renaissance of the 1930s and during his time in Edinburgh MacLean mixed with and was influenced by the leading figures of that 'movement', especially Christopher Murray Grieve, 'Hugh MacDiarmid' whom he revered and who is cited in the opening lines of *An Cuilithionn*.¹¹² While MacLean wrote exclusively in Gaelic and most of these writers used English they also produced important works which took the history of the clearances and the land question as their theme.

Neil M. Gunn published *Butcher's Broom* in 1934, this novel contained an extended historical discussion of the impact of the clearances on a community in Sutherland. *The Silver Darlings* followed in 1942 and could be said to be a sequel to *Butcher's Broom* in the sense that it looked at the fishing communities of the Moray Firth in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars. Gunn was not only concerned with the history of the land question in his fiction, although the amount of detailed research which he carried out was considerable, he also related it to contemporary concerns. Gunn was a pragmatic nationalist and this comes through from one of his later, and supposedly lesser, novels: *The Drinking Well* (1946). This book deals with economic conditions in the central highlands during the difficult years of the 1930s. It is full of set-piece scenes where characters debate different forms of nationalism and practical solutions for agricultural

¹¹¹ Alexander Nicolson, *History of Skye*, 3rd edn, ed. Cailean MacLean (Kershader, 2012), 273–81; Alexander Nicolson, *The Guidebook to the Isle of Skye and Adjacent Islands* (Glasgow, no date), 60, 96 – 100; compare his comments to the sanitised accounts in other histories of this period such as W.C. MacKenzie, *The Highlands and Islands of Scotland: A Historical Survey*, rev. edn (Edinburgh and London, 1949) or the same author's earlier *History of the Outer Hebrides* (Paisley and London, 1903).

¹¹² Emma Dymock, 'The quest for identity in Sorley MacLean's "An Cuilithionn": journeying into politics and beyond', University of Edinburgh, PhD thesis, 2008, 33–7.

problems.¹¹³ Gunn was from Caithness and his family were fishermen. Like John Murdoch and Alexander Carmichael he worked in the excise service prior to resigning, at the cost of his pension, to become a full-time writer. Gunn's work on highland history was joined by Fionn MacColla's *And the Cock Crew* (1945) and Iain Crichton Smith's *Consider the Lillies* (1968).¹¹⁴ Both novels were based, if somewhat loosely, on the Sutherland clearances and dealt with the theme of the perceived betrayal of the people by the clergy of the established church. Norman MacCaig's poem 'A Man in Assynt' suggests the anachronism of land being bought and sold in an economic market; even more fundamentally it implies the absurdity of the concept of human 'ownership of land'. Both ideas have been central to radical critiques of the land system in Scotland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Even Joe Corrie, the Miner poet and playwright, composed poems about the Highland clearances.¹¹⁵ These are important works in the history of Scottish literature but they are important in a history of the highland land question for other reasons. In a period from the 1930s to the 1970s these and other works did much to keep the issue alive in the minds of a wider public who may not have been directly affected by the grievances associated with Scotland's systems of land-ownership and tenure. The most important work in the context, however, was not a novel or a poem but a play. One of the most important theatre companies in Scotland was 7:84. In the 1970s they were responsible for the staging of John McGrath's play about the history of

¹¹³ Richard Price, *The Fabulous Matter of Fact: The Poetic of Neil M. Gunn* (Edinburgh, 1991), 42–61, 90–102, 134–49; Margery McCulloch, *The Novels of Neil M. Gunn: A Critical Study* (Edinburgh, 1987), 45–61, 119–31; Gunn's friend and Excise colleague, Maurice Walsh, a Kerryman, also touched on some of these issues in his fiction, notably his *Trouble in the Glen* (Edinburgh, 1950).

¹¹⁴ It is striking that the seminal events of the 1880s have not attracted much attention from historical novelists, although Allan Campbell McLean's *Ribbon of Fire* (London, 1962) ought to be noted.

¹¹⁵ 'Highland Clearance, 1812' in Joe Corrie, *Scottish Pride and Other Poems* (Newton Stewart, c.1955), 17; 'A Highland Clearance', in Joe Corrie, *The Image O' God and Other Poems* (Glasgow, c. 1927), 11; Linda Mackenney (ed.), *Joe Corrie: Plays, Poems and Theatre Writings* (Edinburgh, 1985).

the Scottish Highlands: *The Cheviot the Stag and the Black Black Oil*. The group takes its name from the reported statistic that 84 per cent of wealth in British society was concentrated in the hands of only 7 per cent of the population. The play opened in Aberdeen, the oil capital of Scotland, in 1973, and subsequently played to audiences in village halls throughout the Highlands, with each performance followed by a dance, reflecting the fact that entertainment and politics were the joint objectives of the play. The play dealt with the ways in which the highlands had been exploited by sheep farmers, landlords, shooting tenants and, in the later twentieth century, the forces of international capitalism represented by the oil industry. The text also dealt with the ways in which the people of the highlands fought back against such forces. The demonic speech of Texas Jim, the arch-exploiter, contains the central challenge of the play.¹¹⁶ Although McGrath's politics were Marxist the growing nationalist movement saw political potential in the way that people reacted to the performances. In combination with the new and assertive *West Highland Free Press* the reaction to the *Cheviot* helped to raise the profile of the land question in Scottish politics at a particularly interesting moment when neither of the main political parties seemed to have very many fresh ideas. This was one of these moments when issues relating to land transcended the highlands and were seen as central to Scottish politics as a whole. The introverted devolution debate, which began in earnest in 1974, probably did as much as anything to ensure that nothing tangible would emerge from this period of cultural politics.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ John McGrath, *Six-Pack: Plays for Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1996), 139–99; John McGrath, 'The Year of the Cheviot', in John McGrath, *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* (revised, illustrated edition, London, 1993), v–xxix; Linda Mackenney, 'The People's Story: 7:84 Scotland', in Randall Stevenson and Gavin Wallace (eds), *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies* (Edinburgh, 1996), 65–7; Laurence Gourievidis, 'The Image of the Highland Clearances, c. 1880–1990', unpublished PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, 1993, 265–81.

¹¹⁷ Cameron, *Impaled on a Thistle*, 296–319.

The land question has been the key political issue in the highlands since 1886. There has been a widespread consensus that control and ownership of land is the key element in the development of the highlands. In the 1880s the principal objective was the achievement of security of tenure and access to more land for grazing. This is clear from the evidence given to the Napier Commission. The first objective was achieved with the Crofters' Act of 1886 but it provided only very weak provisions for making more land available to crofters. This is evident from the crofters' testimony to the 'Deer Forest Commission' in the early 1890s.¹¹⁸ Successive pieces of legislation in 1897, 1911 and 1919 went some way towards dealing with the latter grievance. These acts were developed with different ideological objectives and in different historical contexts. That of 1897 was introduced by a Conservative government with the aim of releasing landlords from the burden of dealing with small tenants and offering them the opportunity, at the price of their crofter tenure, to become outright owners of their own land: they proved to be uninterested in this.¹¹⁹ The only exceptions were the crofters of Glendale in the north west of the island of Skye who purchased their holdings in 1904 and paid off their loans in the mid-1950s. This fact means that the tenure and housing pattern in this area of Skye is distinctive.¹²⁰ The Act of 1911 was motivated by short-term political gain by a Liberal government elected on the back of strident rhetoric on the land question. Its hasty drafting and the fact that it became a pawn in the battle with the House of Lords delayed its passage and

¹¹⁸ PP 1895 XXXVIII XXXIX, *Royal Commission (Highlands and Islands) 1892*.

¹¹⁹ Cameron, *Land for the People?*, 83–101.

¹²⁰ NRS, AF42/226, 804, 1851, 2574, 4108; Cameron, *Land for the People?*, 96–8; Hunter, *From the Low Tide of the Sea*, 29–32.

compromised its effectiveness.¹²¹ The final piece of legislation in this first phase of land reform – the Land Settlement Scotland Act of 1919 – was a product of the drive to build a ‘land fit for heroes’ in the aftermath of the Great War. It was passed with broad support by an all-powerful coalition government, it had substantial funding and it reshaped the pattern of landownership. The land acquired by the state under the 1919 Act forms the basis of the crofting estates which remain in the hands of the Scottish. This was, effectively, land nationalisation. The crofters on these estates paid somewhat higher rents than those on private estates but their landlord provided more services than many private owners and, crucially, ownership was perceived to be more stable.

Although land reform declined in political prominence from the mid 1920s, it remained an important idea for those who thought that alternative policies were inadequate. The debate was enlivened by the creation of a Scottish Parliament in 1999 and the passage of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act in 2003. The land question, however, is not solely to be understood in legislative terms. At important points the people of the highlands drove the discussion through their own actions. This was not confined to the well-known events of the 1880s. In the 1920s it came in the form of forcible occupation through ‘land raids’. In later periods it was through creative thinking about new forms of ownership and ‘community action’ which capitalised on renewed interest in the land question. The means – especially cultural – by which land reform was kept alive from the 1930s to the 1990s are important for an understanding of more recent events.

¹²¹ Cameron, *Land for the People?*, 102–64 ; Leneman, *Fit For Heroes?*, 5–19.

A strong continuity has been the continued existence of crofting as a form of land tenure. Its survival, despite numerous attempts to ‘reform’ it and a widespread appreciation of its limitations, is one of the most powerful ways in which the history of the highlands can be seen as distinctive in the years since the late nineteenth century. Indeed, with the creation of the ‘Crofting Counties’ in 1886 this form of tenure can be seen as one way of defining the limits of the highlands.¹²²

The pattern of landownership in Scotland was another distinctive feature of historical development. Concentration of private landownership north of the border was remarkable in the Victorian period and, despite increased taxation and redistribution of land, remained so well into the twentieth century. Until the 1870s little was known about landownership in Britain. An official *Return of Owners of Land* in 1876 was followed in the late 1870s and early 1880s by successive editions of John Bateman’s enumeration of landed proprietors. From this evidence it was clear that Scottish land was in remarkably few hands: 1,758 landowners owned 92 per cent of the total area of land in estates of more than 1000 acres. The figure in England was 56.1 per cent, 60.8 per cent in Wales and 78.4 per cent in Ireland. This concentration of land did not necessarily bring great wealth to its owners. The Duke of Buccleuch, most of whose 460,000 acres were in Scotland, earned £232,000 from his land. The Duke of Westminster earned £290,000 from less than 20,000 acres of prime-value urban land in London. The Duke of Sutherland who owned 1.36 million acres, mostly in the north of Scotland, earned only

¹²² Ewen A. Cameron, ‘The Scottish highlands as a special policy area, 1886 to 1965’, *Rural History*, 8 (1997), 195–215.

£142,000.¹²³ Nevertheless, it was the size of Scottish estates which attracted opprobrium from radicals. Relatively low landed incomes did not detract from social and political control. By late Victorian Scotland a plethora of organisations were responsible for local administration – Parochial Boards for poor relief after 1845, School Boards after 1872 and County Councils after 1889 – giving landowners a host of channels in which to exercise influence, to say nothing about their uninhibited direct power over their tenants before the 1880s. Often this influence was directed through their factors or other employees.

There are rich traditions of anti-landlordism in Scotland. In the Liberal tradition the landlord class attracted opprobrium for its dominance of the Church of Scotland, at least before the abolition of patronage in 1874. It was also condemned for its protection of the ground and winged game which damaged tenants' crops, although this grievance was reduced in the 1880s. The landlord also had the power to create fictitious votes and to use and abuse political influence in a variety of ways. Liberal landowners were just as adept in these black arts as their Conservative opponents. This was evident in the large highland constituencies which were dominated by landlord representation until 1885. Until the passage of the Crofters Act of 1886 and the creation of the Crofters Commission, the landlord also had extensive power over the tenant, especially on the crofting estates in the Highlands where leases were infrequent and most tenants held their land at the will of the landowner.

¹²³ David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven, 1990), 9, 54–5, 710–11. for a detailed discussion of Sutherland see Annie Tindley, *The Sutherland Estate, 1850–1920* (Edinburgh, 2010).

A new strand of anti-landlordism was beginning to develop in the 1880s which emphasized the economic problems consequent upon the concentration of landownership in few hands and the extensive power which came with it. This argument was articulated forcefully during the 1880s, especially in the works of the American economist Henry George who saw in the Scottish case a powerful example of the iniquities of private landownership. His was not only a critique of rural society but of society in general. This theme developed throughout the period up to the outbreak of the Great War. George spoke often in Scotland, including in the highlands but he did have Scottish critics. The duke of Argyll was an obvious and perhaps predictable one but the Caithness-born economist John Rae was another. He drew on Scottish evidence to argue that income from the landed estates was not 'unearned' but the legitimate outcome of investment of landlords' capital.¹²⁴ Many of the ideas raised by George entered the mainstream of political debate. Although few elected politicians were prepared to endorse his 'single tax', the idea of land- values taxation was embraced by the Liberal party in the Edwardian period. The rhetoric associated with this 'land campaign' of the years just before the Great War drew extensively on the example of the Scottish Highlands.

The dominant scholarly interpretation of the position of landownership, especially in the highlands in the period after 1880s, has been one of decline. The landlord class was assaulted by land reform in Scotland and Ireland in the 1880s; by increasing fiscal demands beginning with death duties in the budget of 1893 and increasing after the

¹²⁴ duke of Argyll, 'The Prophet of San Francisco', *Nineteenth Century*, 15 (1884), 537–58; John Rae, *Contemporary Socialism* (London, 1884), 474. This author (1845–1915) should not be confused with the Scottish-Canadian economist John Rae (1796–1872), although both men published biographies of Adam Smith.

election of 1906 (although these demands were rather modest); by reformed game laws which favoured the tenants and by the beginnings of land settlement in the years just before the Great War. The assault in the 1880s and 1890s had not produced much of a fight-back from landowners, despite the writings of the eighth duke of Argyll. George Malcolm, a prominent factor, led the establishment of the Highland Property Association in the early 1890s. The debate in the Edwardian period was contested to a much greater degree. A group of concerned landlords formed the Scottish Land and Property Federation in 1906 in response to the rhetoric of radical Liberals.¹²⁵

The memory of the land issue in Scotland, fuelled by these traditions of anti-landlordism, is one of grievance, dispossession and emigration. The increasing commercialisation of landed estates drove the people from the land and beyond the shores of Scotland. It is, of course, important that the voices of the descendants of the victims of these processes be heard alongside those of historians, poets, playwrights and journalists. What seems to have been forgotten is often as interesting as what has been remembered. A historian investigating in the 1980s the land settlement operation in the aftermath of the Great War reported that she was unable to recover oral testimony about the topic but that many to whom she spoke were willing to relate material about the clearances, which they had not witnessed or experienced. She concluded that the land settlement operation had been ‘forgotten’.¹²⁶ Interestingly, this amnesia has persisted. In a debate in the Scottish

¹²⁵ Information about the HPA can be found in Cameron, *Land for the People?*, 78–9; NRS, GD325 is the reference for the records of the SLPF.

¹²⁶ Leah Leneman, *Fit for Heroes? Land Settlement in Scotland after World War I* (Aberdeen, 1989), 192, 207.

Parliament in 2000 the MSP for the Western Isles, Alasdair Morrison, asserted that, from the point of view of the victims of the clearances,

it would have seemed inconceivable that there would one day be public funds available to help Highland communities to take on ownership and management of the land from which so many of our people had been evicted. Today, thanks to this Administration's commitment to land reform such funds are firmly in place.

127

Leaving aside the natural tendency for a government minister to emphasise the novelty of the policy of his administration, this is a striking statement given earlier Scottish land reform.

Land for the People?

In 1897 the Conservative government had attempted to import the policy of land purchase from Ireland with its Congested Districts Act. Long-term loans at low interest rates were offered to crofters who wished to acquire the responsibilities and privileges of outright ownership. Although the Board created in 1897 lacked power of compulsory purchase and was poorly funded, some iconic locations were affected by its proceedings. The farm of Syre in Strathnaver, one of the key sites in the history of the clearances, was purchased in 1900. Further, in 1904 the estates of Glendale and Kilmuir in Skye, hotspots in the agitation of the 1880s, came on the market and were bought by the Board. The outcomes of these three transactions demonstrate that the highland land question could

¹²⁷ *ORSP*, 27 Sept. 2000, col. 700.

not be reduced to straightforward solutions. In the case of Syre the holders petitioned to return to the status of tenants. In Kilmuir, where the level of political awareness was particularly high, the crofters knew that the election of a Liberal government in 1906 would open new possibilities. The crofters simply refused to accept the offer of ownership. Protest continued on this estate even after the campaign to convince the crofters of the benefits of ownership had ceased and the personal intervention and presence of the Secretary for Scotland was required to deal with the matter. Only at Glendale, where the crofters signed up for fifty-year mortgages, which were paid off on schedule in the mid-1950s, was the policy implemented as its originators intended. These events are important in a discussion of the long-term development of the highland land question. Land was being transferred to the people but the offer was greeted less than enthusiastically, certainly compared to the response of small tenants in Ireland. At one level the matter was one of pecuniary calculation: the loan repayments plus owners' rates were more expensive than the rents to the landlord plus tenants' share of the rates. At another level, however, there were deeper issues at stake. There was a feeling that the 1886 Act had recognised customary and ancestral rights of ownership and that it was unnecessary and inappropriate to be asked to take on long-term debt to acquire formal title. The originators of the policy, a Conservative government, should not be discounted as a source of its unpopularity and the crofters' movement had inveighed against land purchase – merely multiplying the problem of private landownership. Tenancy was preferable to ownership and the Liberal government which was elected in 1906 appeared to be offering this, a point of which crofters in contested areas such as Kilmuir and Vatersay were well aware. The Prime Minister, Henry Campbell Bannerman, had after all

declared during the election campaign that land should be a 'treasure house for the nation' rather than a 'pleasure ground for the rich'.¹²⁸

The matter did not turn out to be so straightforward, however, as internal cabinet divisions and antagonism from the House of Lords meant that the Small Landholders (Scotland) Bill did not reach the statute book until 1911. This is an interesting item in the history of Scottish land reform in that it extended a form of crofter tenure to the rest of Scotland, although modifications were made for lowland tenants who, unlike the crofters, owned their own improvements. The bill, and the act, was controversial because it gave a new body, the Board of Agriculture for Scotland, the power to compel landowners to create new tenanted holdings on their privately-owned land. Poor drafting meant that the bill was a feast for the legal representatives of landowners, such as the redoubtable Edinburgh firm Skene, Edwards and Garson, who wished to delay schemes for the creation of small holdings. The bad odour in which the act was held spread to the other new institution which it created, the Scottish Land Court. This was a replacement for the Crofters Commission but in its early years it did not have the same high reputation as its predecessor. This was partly due to the depth of opposition against anything associated with the 1911 Act but also due to the manner of its Chairman, Lord Kennedy, who acted in such a way as to give evidence to critics who felt that the Court was biased in favour of the tenants.¹²⁹ The upshot of these various problems was that the 1911 Act was strikingly ineffective. It attracted just over 8500 applications from the highlands for small holdings,

¹²⁸ *The Times*, 22 Dec. 1905.

¹²⁹ *Scotsman*, 29 May 1914, 14 Jul 1917; Walter Mercer, 'The pre-Gibson chairmen' and Ewen A. Cameron, "'An Agrarian Star Chamber'? The Scottish Land Court to 1955', in *No Ordinary Court: 100 Years of the Scottish Land Court* (Edinburgh, 1912).

indicating the continuing demand for land, but was only able to create 482 new holdings and enlarge a further 397.¹³⁰ This only served to increase frustration, such as over the farm of Reef in the western parish of Uig, Lewis.¹³¹ The end result was that on the eve of the Great War, despite the attention of governments of both parties in the period since 1886, little progress had been made.

During the Great War some piecemeal advance was achieved. The urgent requirement to bring more land into production led the government to use the catch-all Defence of the Realm Act to turn deer forests over to grazing but this was not a permanent solution, hence the need for more legislation once peace had been concluded.¹³² The immediate aftermath of the war showed that protests would resume with increased intensity and that those involved would refer to their wartime experiences to give even greater emotional depth to the long-standing demand for land.

A dramatic shift in the pace of land reform occurred after the War with the passage of the Land Settlement (Scotland) Act in 1919. Although there were administrative problems, frustration among the applicants for land and a renewal of protest, the achievements were considerable.¹³³ In the period when the policy was implemented in the most concerted way, before 1925, there were 9600 applicants for land, a total of 1571 new holdings were created, a further 1194 were enlarged. If we narrow the focus to the Hebrides, the area

¹³⁰ *BoAS, Annual Report, 1919*, appendices 1, 2.

¹³¹ The events are documented at NRS, AF67/61, 62.

¹³² Iain J. M. Robertson, 'The historical geography of social protest in highland Scotland, 1914–c.1939', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Bristol, 1998, 117–22; Ewen A. Cameron and Iain J.M. Robertson, 'Fighting and bleeding for the land: the Great War and the Scottish highlands', in C. M. M. Macdonald and E. W. McFarland (eds), *Scotland and the Great War* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999), 81–102

¹³³ Iain Robertson, 'Governing the highlands: the place of popular protest in the highlands of Scotland after 1918', *Rural History*, 8 (1997), 109–24.

where the demand for land was most intense, the results are even more striking. After considering 4370 well-founded applications the Board of Agriculture for Scotland created 932 new holdings and enlarged a further 676. The Board had access to £2.75 million to carry out its duties.

These bald figures give a rather simplified view of the outcomes of the operation. There were a series of important tensions which made the process of land redistribution very complicated. Oddly, given the history of landlord-tenant relations in the highlands the principal problem was not the reluctance of landlords to deal with the government, quite the opposite. Some, such as the principal landlords on the islands of Skye, where over 300 new crofts were created, were in such financial difficulties that they had little option but to sell land to the government. MacLeod of Dunvegan received £56,809 for 60,000 acres of land and the Trustees of Lord MacDonald, who was both financially embarrassed and mentally incapacitated, were similarly enthusiastic about selling Scorrybreck, one of their best sheep farms, to the Board.¹³⁴ The Board was one of the few active purchasers in the market for highland land in the 1920s but it was not only the most poverty-stricken landlords who sought to offload land to the government. The fifth duke of Sutherland proved to be an enthusiastic vendor. Prior to the Great War he sought to restore the finances of his vast estate by extensive land sales and 600,000 acres were disposed of. The Sutherland estate had been a particular target of Lloyd George's rhetoric at the launch of his 'land campaign' in 1913 when he argued that valuable productive land was being used for sport and the duke's response was to offer 200,000 acres at a low price.

¹³⁴ NRS, E824/615 documents the dealings between the BoAS, the Treasury and MacLeod of Dunvegan in March 1920; Clan Donald Centre, Armadale, Skye, Lord Macdonald Papers, Bundles 3666 and 3675, contain material about Scorrybreck.

This was a challenge to the government to back its rhetoric with action. Lloyd George declined to accept this challenge and the duke's 'generosity' was rebuffed.¹³⁵ Lord Lovat was disgusted by the hypocrisy of the Chancellor, noting that having 'harped continually' on the value of the land he now 'turn[s] round and say[s] that it would not keep a mouse'.¹³⁶ In 1916 the duke offered the 12,000 acre farm of Borgie as a gift to the government for soldier settlement.¹³⁷ These singular events, plus the intervention of the government, indicated the extent to which the marketability of highland land had declined since its heyday in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars when large numbers of rich industrialists and merchants, such as James Matheson, bought large areas of the highlands at a time when the wider British land market was in the doldrums.¹³⁸

There were greater tensions between the government and land raiders and, indeed, within what has been assumed to be the 'crofting community'. There were several elements to this. The first arose from the fact that the act of 1919 gave preference to ex-servicemen as applicants for land. This fitted the rhetoric of post-war reconstruction but these men were not always the best qualified and there was resentment when they jumped the 'queue' ahead of older applicants whose claims were long-standing.¹³⁹ There was further potential for difficulties between the landless cottars and crofters who already had land and were seeking enlargements of their crofts.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Annie Tindley, "'The system of landlordism supreme': David Lloyd George, the 5th duke of Sutherland and highland land sales, 1898–1919", *British Scholar*, 3 (2010), 24–42.

¹³⁶ NRS, GD325/1/223, Lovat to SLPF, 3 Nov. 1913.

¹³⁷ Leah Leneman, 'Borgie: a debatable gift to the nation', *Northern Scotland*, 9 (1989), 77–82.

¹³⁸ T. M. Devine, 'The Emergence of a New Elite in the Western Highlands and Islands, 1800–60', in T. M. Devine (ed.), *Improvement and Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1989), 108–42.

¹³⁹ *BoAS, Annual Report, 1922*, ix.

¹⁴⁰ Robertson, 'Historical geography of social protest', 237–9.

A number of apparent breakthroughs were made in the 1920s. Not the least was a successful migration scheme which took crofters from Harris and Lewis and planted them on new crofts on the west of the island of Skye. Prior to the war migration had not proved possible to implement. The state now owned the land on Skye on which the new townships were created and could act more decisively. The crofters from Harris brought their weaving looms with them and established a distinctive community. One visitor even claimed to be able to discern the origins of the people by the style in which they built outhouses alongside the generic Board of Agriculture houses.¹⁴¹

Why was this extensive land settlement operation carried out at this moment? The Prime Minister, Lloyd George, was steeped in the Welsh anti-landlord tradition but this is not a sufficient explanation. The fact that it came just after the Great War is important but it is not enough to accept coalition rhetoric about building a ‘land fit for heroes’. Land settlement was seen as a way of responding to the quite widespread fears of violence and extreme politics in the immediate aftermath of the war. Highland land raids must be one of the clearest examples of this much-debated feature of the mindset of inter-war governments. Part of this fear of violence arose from the Irish context. Since 1916 Ireland had experienced successive waves of internal conflict. It was this context which induced a Board of Agriculture Official to remark on the fact that hebridean disturbances were being driven by the ‘Sinn Fein element’ among the younger generation. He did not mean this in a literal sense but was using the term as shorthand for ‘troublemakers’. It is

¹⁴¹ NRS, E824/538, 659; AF83/30; Anon, ‘Land Settlement in Skye: Migration schemes’, *Scottish Journal of Agriculture*, 7 (1924), ; Isobel Frances Grant, *The Making of Am Fasgadh: An Account of the Origins of the Highland Folk Museum by its Founder* (Edinburgh, 2007), 30; see also Neil Gunn, *Off in a Boat* (London, 1938), 91–6.

striking that such a description should be drawn from Ireland which had in the 1880s been perceived to have delivered so many ‘agitators’, in the language of the time.¹⁴²

The 1919 act was the high point of land reform in Scotland in a legislative sense. As the leading historian of the crofting community has concluded:

By the end of the 1920s ... the long struggle for land ... was virtually at an end. The agrarian and social injustices perpetrated by the creators of the land system that had taken shape during the clearances had been permanently removed – from the crofting community’s hebridean heartland at any rate. In the outer isles, in Tiree and Skye, the majority of the farms so brutally established in the nineteenth century’s first sixty years were occupied once more by crofting tenants – many of them former cottars whose ancestors had been evicted from the lands to which their descendants now returned.¹⁴³

At one level then this was the end of a story but not a conclusion in which every issue had been resolved. There were some areas of the highlands which had seen massive depopulation in the nineteenth century but which had not received any of the

¹⁴² NRS AF67/152, John MacDonald to Skene Edwards and Garson, 27 Jan. 1921); C. W. J. Withers, ‘Rural protest in the highlands of Scotland and Ireland, 1850–1930’, in S. J. Connolly, R. A. Houston and R. J. Morris (eds), *Conflict, Identity and Economic Development, Ireland and Scotland, 1600–1939* (Preston, 1995), 185; Other such references can be located, see: NRS AF67/248, Lord Leverhulme to Robert Munro, 21 Sep. 1918, in which Leverhulme argued that by perpetuating crofting ‘we are merely converting a peaceful intelligent, law abiding people into a seething mass of discontented humanity, such as exists in the outlying districts of Ireland’; he made a similar point with a derogatory reference to Ireland in a letter to the Marquis of Breadalbane, NRS, Gilmour of Montrave and Lundin Muniments, GD383/16/16x, Leverhulme to Breadalbane, 24 Aug. 1920; NRS, Exchequer Files, E824/469, Minute by G. C. Upcott, on Land Settlement Policy, 15 Jul. 1930, is interesting in that the opposite case is made: ‘If the policy of settlement were now arrested social order would be gravely menaced and the position in many parts of Scotland would become not unlike that of Ireland’.

¹⁴³ James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh, 1976), 206.

demographic benefit from land settlement. The island of Mull is the most extreme case and helps to explain the continuing travails of that island in the twentieth century compared, for example, to the history of Skye over the same period.

The Demise of the Land Question

It has been suggested that the conditions which had sustained the debate on the land question were much reduced in force by the 1920s. The House of Lords – the ‘House of Landlords’ in Liberal demonology – which had held up the Budget of 1909 and Scottish land reform in 1907 and 1908, had had its wings clipped by the Parliament Act of 1911. The Irish question, which had driven much of the debate about land, had been ‘solved’ with partition in 1922. The Liberal party, which had kept the issue close to the top of its political agenda, had lost power amidst division and electoral defeat in the inter-war period leaving the Conservatives, hardly the natural party of land reform, to govern for most of the 1920s and 1930s. Above all, landowners seemed to be in rapid retreat with the vast land sales and falling land values of the 1920s that the ‘power’ of the landowner – the target of all reformers – was compromised to such a degree that further reform seemed unnecessary.¹⁴⁴ Attempts by the Liberals to revive the land question in the 1920s smacked of the desperation of a party willing to try anything to return to former glories.¹⁴⁵ This interpretation has much to commend it but it does not fully work in the Scottish, far less the highland, case. A slightly different history is required.

¹⁴⁴ F.M.L. Thompson, ‘Epilogue: the strange death of the English land question’, in Matthew Cragoe and Paul Readman (eds), *The Land Question in Britain, 1750–1950* (Houndmills, 2010), 255–70; see the chapter entitled ‘The strange death of the land issue’ in Ian Packer, *Lloyd George, Liberalism and the Land: The Land Issue and Party Politics in England, 1906–1914* (Woodbridge, 2001), 178–193.

¹⁴⁵ Michael Dawson, ‘The Liberal land policy, 1924–1929: electoral strategy and internal division’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 2 (1991), 272–90.

During the 1930s the debate about the highlands moved onto different terms.¹⁴⁶ A number of traditional approaches seemed to have been tried and found wanting. Land reform had run out of steam in the mid-1920s as most of the land which could be redistributed under the legislation of 1919 had been used for that purpose. Further land-settlement legislation of 1934 shifted the emphasis to creating intensive small holdings to relieve unemployment in industrial areas. If 60 per cent of land settlement had been in the highlands in the 1920s then 80 per cent of the new holdings created in the 1930s were in the lowlands.¹⁴⁷ Encouragement of emigration was not a realistic option in the world depression of the 1930s. Temporary migration to the lowlands in search of wage-labour to supplement the resources to be gained from the croft was unlikely to be fruitful in a period of industrial and agricultural depression. New thinking was required and further land reform, even on a different basis to that advanced since the 1880s, did not seem to be on the agenda of government. Several features, however, kept it alive in the minds of the people of the highlands. The first was that the landowners seemed to retain power, especially through their role in local government. Although the declining political influence of the nobility can be charted straightforwardly, the landowning class is more diverse than this. In the period from the creation of County Councils in 1889 to their abolition and replacement by two-tier Regional and District Councils in 1975 landowners were important in Scottish local government.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Clive M. Birnie, “‘New deal’ or raw deal”? Public Administration and Economic Development in the Highlands & Islands of Scotland, 1929–1939’, unpublished MSc thesis (University of Edinburgh, 2003).

¹⁴⁷ Alexander S. Mather, ‘The rise and fall of government-assisted land settlement in Scotland’, *Land Use Policy*, 2 (1985), 222–3.

¹⁴⁸ I. G. C. Hutchison, ‘The nobility and politics in Scotland, c1880–1939’, in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Scottish Elites* (Edinburgh, 1994), 131–51.

Landowners also engaged in a partially successful reinvention of their role as guardians of the landscape and protectors of 'heritage'. This was not only a matter of accountancy through the creation of new income streams but a means by which power could be entrenched.¹⁴⁹ The foundation of the National Trust for Scotland in 1931 was heavily influenced by landowners such as the Duke of Atholl, the earl of Crawford and Balcarres, Sir John Stirling Maxwell and Iain Colquhoun of Luss. A similar group was involved in the Association for the Preservation of Rural Scotland.¹⁵⁰ One of the first substantial purchases of land by the NTS was in Glencoe in 1937. This purchase was motivated by leading figures in the Trust with an interest in mountaineering. The solitude which enhances the experience of that sport and the fragility of the mountain environment inclined the Trust to adopt models of management which made access quite difficult. While mountaineering did not attract the same degree of opprobrium as deer stalking, perhaps because of its more demotic history, the overall results were not dissimilar. Rather like the defenders of deer forests the argument was that the land was not suitable for human settlement or agriculture. Leading figures were not slow to intervene to shape the debate when it was suggested that the road through the Glen be improved. Perhaps knowing the reputation of the Prime Minister for exaggerated respect for the landed and titled, they took their campaign directly to Ramsay MacDonald in their attempt to improve the aesthetic appearance of the road.¹⁵¹ Interestingly, MacDonald came under

¹⁴⁹ David McCrone and Angela Morris, 'Lords and heritages: the transformation of the great lairds of Scotland', in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Scottish Elites* (Edinburgh, 1994), 182–5.

¹⁵⁰ Hayden Lorimer, "'Your wee bit hill and glen': the cultural politics of the Scottish highlands, c.1918–1945', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Loughborough, 1997).

¹⁵¹ TNA, James Ramsay MacDonald MSS, PRO 30/69/1525, ff. 41–2: K. C. Ferguson (Secretary, APRS) to Colquhoun, 18 Apr. 1934; f. 44, Colquhoun to MacDonald, 1 Jul. 1930; ff. 60–2, Memo from APRS (signed by Colquhoun), 10 Jun. 1930.

countervailing pressure from his friend in Ballachulish, Dr Lachlan Grant, who suggested that he ignore the landowners and consider the road as a boon to the locals and as a contribution to the economic development of the region.¹⁵² Over time the National Trust for Scotland became a significant landowner in the Highlands with a crofting estate at Balmacara and, through a private deal struck with the Gaelic scholar John Lorne Campbell, ownership of the Isle of Canna.¹⁵³

The crofting system, with all its imperfections, meant that governments could not ignore the question of land tenure in their thinking about the highlands. By the 1930s it was evident that there were considerable problems with crofting tenure. These difficulties had ensued since a Court of Session case in 1917 when it became possible for an absentee tenant to retain security of tenure. The economic difficulties of the inter-war period also had their effect. The result of land settlement had been to create a multiplicity of small and, in agricultural terms, uneconomic holdings. These problems arose from a combination of a disastrous collapse in agricultural prices in the 1930s alongside depression in the lowland economy and curtailment of emigration. This combination of circumstances meant that the further development of small holding schemes was very unlikely, especially in a period of retrenchment in public expenditure. An investigation into the economic conditions of the highlands in 1938 turned to crofting only mid-way through its text and argued:

¹⁵² TNA, PRO 30/69/1172/2 ff. 598–9, Lachlan Grant to JRM, 3 Mar. 1927.

¹⁵³ Ray Perman, *The Man Who Gave Away His Island: A Life of John Lorne Campbell of Canna* (Edinburgh, 2010), 190–218.

If crofting is to take its place as a definite part of the general scheme of national life, it must be raised from being merely an existence to an occupation offering reasonable prospects of affording a living; and as the main objective no longer lies in self-sufficiency, the obvious and natural one must be an adequate return for stock or crop, or alternatively, for labour away from the holding.¹⁵⁴

There was little political will for reform of the crofting system in the late 1930s. The Labour government elected in 1945 had very little interest in the problems of the rural highlands despite a historical commitment to land nationalisation.¹⁵⁵ Towards the end of its period of office it appointed yet another group, the Commission of Enquiry into Crofting Conditions, to look at the crofting system. Its membership included the novelist Neil Gunn and the leading Skye crofter (also a novelist) Margaret MacPherson¹⁵⁶. The report of the Taylor Commission presents a very pessimistic view of the state of the highlands and of crofting in particular. The language of the report is littered with vocabulary such as ‘losing battle’, ‘drift from the land’, ‘atmosphere of decline’, ‘lethargy’, ‘apathy’.¹⁵⁷ The Commission reported that crofting had decayed through a combination of internal inconsistencies and wider economic forces. The most profound problem arose from crofter absenteeism. A Court of Session case in 1917 relating to the

¹⁵⁴ Scottish Economic Committee, *The Highlands and Islands of Scotland: A Review of the Economic Conditions with Recommendations for Improvement* (no place, 1938), 75–6.

¹⁵⁵ Clare V. J. Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside: The Politics of Rural Britain* (Oxford, 2007), 230–2. Kevin Manton, ‘The Labour party and the land question, 1919–51’, *Historical Research*, 79 (2006), 247–69; Mike Tichelar, ‘The Labour party, agricultural policy and the retreat from rural land nationalisation during the Second World War’, *Agricultural History Review*, 51 (2003), 209–25; Peter Weiler, ‘Labour and the land: from municipalisation to the Land Commission’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 19 (2008), 314–43.

¹⁵⁶ MacPherson’s novels included *The Shinty Boys* (London, 1963) and *The Rough Road* (London, 1965), the latter deals with conditions on the Isle of Skye during the economic depression of the 1930s.

¹⁵⁷ PP 1953–4 VIII, *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Crofting Conditions* (Cmd 9091), 9, 18, 23, 25, 46.

1911 Act decided that small landholders (including crofters) need not reside on their holdings. The 1886 act had been very clear about this and it is possible that the decision was contrary to the intentions of parliament when the act was passed. The result was that crofts were lying unused while their holders lived and worked in lowland Scotland or even further afield. Potentially energetic tenants could not get access to crofts and develop the potential of the resources of the land. Taylor recommended that the obligation of residence on, or very near to, the croft be restored and that a new administrative authority be created to enforce this point and regulate the system more generally.¹⁵⁸ The Commission recognised that the problems with crofting went far beyond this technical point, important though it was. There was a sense that the weakness of the original regime had been in the absence of provisions to expand the crofting system. The land settlement operation after 1919 had helped to a degree, although the proliferation of very small holdings was problematic, but its cessation in the 1930s was regretted. Taylor recommended that it be restarted and noted that in many other countries in Europe it was ongoing in the post-war period but that in Scotland only a tiny handful of new holdings had been created. Taylor argued that this was a means by which population could be expanded and retained in crofting areas.¹⁵⁹

Fundamental economic problems were also recognised: the way subsidy encouraged the expansion of sheep numbers and resulted in a reduction of the quality of grazing land; the poor quality of township roads which prevented the integration of crofting communities with the wider economy; the high freight charges which added to the costs of economic

¹⁵⁸ *Commission of Enquiry into Crofting Conditions*, 41.

¹⁵⁹ *Commission of Enquiry into Crofting Conditions*, 361–7.

activity in the highlands.¹⁶⁰ The central importance to crofting of what Taylor called ‘auxiliary employments’ was also recognised. This had been the key element of many debates about crofting since 1886. Some argued that crofts should not be too big in order to facilitate fishing, farm labouring, estate work or temporary migration. The duke of Argyll argued in the 1880s that since agriculture was only a small part of their identity, crofters ought not to be equated to farmers. On the other hand, Conservatives had suggested in the 1890s that it would be more rational to create larger units which would afford more than a subsistence income and help to break the link between crofting and auxiliary employments. Taylor recognised the risk

that the auxiliary employment may completely displace the work on the croft and that the croft should become merely a rate-free dwelling house surrounded by grass on which a few sheep graze.¹⁶¹

The report mentioned the traditional supplements to crofting income but argued that the activity which ought to be encouraged and which had the potential to revive remote crofting communities was forestry. Margaret MacPherson produced a minority report extolling the virtues of land nationalisation arising from her experience as a tenant on a state-owned estate in Skye.¹⁶² Although the evidence given to the Commission is of great value to the historian and the report is measured and informed it was not followed up by

¹⁶⁰ *Commission of Enquiry into Crofting Conditions*, 64–71.

¹⁶¹ *Commission of Enquiry into Crofting Conditions*, 71.

¹⁶² ‘Note of Dissent by Mrs Margaret H. Macpherson’, *Commission of Enquiry into Crofting Conditions*, 91;

there is some evidence that her report may have been toned down compared to earlier drafts after meetings with senior civil servants in the Department of Agriculture, see NLS, Neil M. Gunn Mss, Dep 209, Box 22, Folder 5, Matthew Campbell to Gunn, 2 Feb. 1954. She was still extolling the virtues of public landownership nearly forty years later: see letter to *WHFP*, 6 Jul. 1990.

significant legislation. An Act in 1955 established a new Crofters Commission with regulatory powers but it did not have the capacity to become a transformative force to improve crofting.

The next major reform of crofting took place in 1976 and it was highly controversial. This act established an individual right to buy for crofters. Sitting tenants could acquire title for fifteen times their annual rent. In many ways this was the antithesis of the original objectives of the 1886 Act. This piece of legislation came after a very long controversy and spanning the periods of office of three governments.¹⁶³ It was initiated in the mid 1960s under the Chairmanship of James Shaw Grant at the Crofters Commission. Grant argued that crofting tenure held back development opportunities as tenants could not secure commercial loans as they did not own their land. Further, there was no clear route by which crofters could buy their crofts, they were at the mercy of the landlord's willingness to price and sell the land. The Crofters Commission argued that a wholesale conversion of crofting tenure to ownership would release the development value of croft land. This addressed an old problem in the highlands: the disincentives which prevented crofters from investing in improvements. Before 1886 this arose from the lack of security of tenure, by the 1960s the problem arose from the fact that, in Grant's words, the crofter 'does not share in the increased values arising from changes in land use and he therefore has no incentive to welcome and co-operate in development'.¹⁶⁴ In one sense this was a valuable suggestion. There had long been confusion in seeing crofters merely as small

¹⁶³ James Hunter, *The Claim of Crofting: The Scottish Highlands and Islands, 1930–1990* (Edinburgh, 1991), 125–48.

¹⁶⁴ NRS, CRO3/3/2, Crofters Commission, Recommendations for the Modernisation of Crofting, 17 Oct. 1968; see also Donald J. MacCuish, 'The case for converting crofting tenure to ownership', *TGSI*, 46 (1969–70), **pages?**

farmers and an assumption that agricultural support would deal with their problems. In fact, a more realistic approach was to find ways of increasing other forms of economic activity. Part of this could be achieved by diversifying the economy and increasing the range of such opportunities. The activities of the Highland Fund, which provided unsecured loans, were also relevant but were not capable of delivering large sums of money. Ownership was also important in that it could help crofters raise capital for developing tourist accommodation for example. Unlike earlier attempts by the Commission to reform crofting this idea had some support among the Federation of Crofters Unions which had appeared in the post-war period. Meetings held around the highlands provide evidence that there was, in widely differing areas, support for Shaw Grant's proposals. There was some feeling that crofting tenure, conceived in the 1880s as a protection against the evictions of a previous generation, was now perceived as a limitation on economic opportunity.¹⁶⁵

Others, however, were horrified by the potential for the erosion of crofting which were contained in Shaw Grant's proposals and were critical of the Federation of Crofters Unions for becoming too closely associated with the Commission. Among the most vociferous were Roderick MacFarquhar, a prominent figure in the Labour party in the highlands and an important figure in the Highland Fund; the author and Labour candidate Allan Campbell McLean; and Margaret MacPherson. They argued for public ownership of croft land.¹⁶⁶ Among their proposals were the abolition of the Crofters Commission

¹⁶⁵ *Oban Times*, 20 Mar. 1969; 27 Mar. 1969, 10 Apr. 1969, 17 Apr. 1969 *Stornoway Gazette*, 14 Dec. 1968 15 Feb. 1969, 8 Mar 1969,

¹⁶⁶ The clearest account of the opposition can be found in James N. McCrorie, *The Highland Cause: The Life and Times of Roderick MacFarquhar* (Regina, Saskatchewan, 2001), 200–10.

and the transfer of responsibility for crofting to the Highlands and Islands Development Board, established in 1965. Although this was a coherent argument in that it brought the debate about crofting out of the realm of agriculture and into that of the economic potential of the region, it caused further division in the Labour party and among crofters from different parts of the Highlands when it was proposed at the Scottish Labour Party conference in 1969. The Western Isles Labour party distanced themselves from the ‘foolish and misguided’ proposals. The Federation of Crofters Unions called it an ‘electoral death wish’ for Labour in the Highlands.¹⁶⁷ Interestingly, some Conservative branches, perhaps sensing an opportunity, articulated their support for Grant’s proposals. The Western Isles Association argued that they accorded with the Conservative principle of a ‘property-owning democracy’.¹⁶⁸ This was a phrase developed in the 1920s by Noel Skelton, a Scottish Conservative MP, but it gave expression to an older idea that property brought responsibility and a stake in society. These arguments had been used in favour of the land-purchase provisions of the Congested Districts Act in 1897.¹⁶⁹ The Labour government fell before legislation could be presented.

The Conservative government which took office after the 1970 general election produced a bill which gave individual crofters the right to buy, strikingly different from the Commission proposals for a mass conversion of tenure. This bill did not reach the statute book prior to the general elections of 1974. The new Labour government put forward the bill which eventually became the Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act of 1976. This gave

¹⁶⁷ *Stornoway Gazette*, 21 Apr. 1969; *Glasgow Herald*, 20 Dec. 1968, 21 Jan 1969.

¹⁶⁸ *Stornoway Gazette*, 3 May 1969.

¹⁶⁹ Noel Skelton, *Constructive Conservatism* (Edinburgh and London, 1924), 24–31; David Torrance, *Noel Skelton and the Property-Owning Democracy* (London, 2010); Hatfield House Mss, 3M/E, Argyll to Salisbury, 27 Jul. 1895.

crofters the right to buy at fifteen times the annual rent of their holding and the right to share in the development value of any land which was decrofted or resumed. The land purchased, it is important to note, remained within crofting tenure. To take full advantage of the potentially increased value of their land crofters had to release it from the shackles of crofting. The cases of resumption and decrofting in the aftermath of the 1976 Act took much good land and many larger holdings in the eastern part of the Crofting Counties out of crofting. It was this unintended long-term consequence that has stimulated the view that the Act was damaging to the crofting system. This was especially marked by the early 1990s when demand for croft land had increased and its diminishing supply was adding to the pressure.¹⁷⁰ Despite the controversy associated with its introduction, the 1976 act has not proved to be very popular with crofters, only a very small proportion of whom took advantage of the its provisions and most of those were in the east highlands where the crofts were larger, more fertile and had greater economic and development potential, hence the higher level of demand for them¹⁷¹. The rights under the act have been used as a threatened means of spoiling the market value of landed estates in the interests of community buyouts, as at Assynt in 1992.

The latest stage of crofting reform, a seemingly endless process followed a fairly familiar pattern. A Committee of Inquiry on Crofting was established in 2006 with Professor Mark Shucksmith as chair, it reported in 2008. It was clear that there should be no change to the essential rights granted to crofters in 1886. The report considered ways of trying to make it easier for people to enter the crofting system and to deal with profound social

¹⁷⁰ “‘The ’76 Act was a mistake,” says Commission chairman’, *WHFP*, 2 Mar. 1990; ‘Trojan horse of crofting’, letter from M. MacGregor, Helmsdale, to *Glasgow Herald*, 24 May 1991.

¹⁷¹ My late father purchased his twenty-three acre croft at Stronaba in Lochaber in the late 1980s.

problems such as the lack of affordable housing. Local Crofting Boards were proposed as a replacement for the Crofters Commission.¹⁷² The terms of the debate over this report were informed by the place of the market in the crofting system. Shucksmith proposed attaching a ‘real burden’ to a croft house to try to enforce residency. This was highly controversial as it would have prevented crofters from being able to realise the full value of the house on the property market. One critic complained that this would ‘destroy the value of crofters’ property.’¹⁷³ There were, essentially, two visions for crofting being debated here. One was based on notions of individual property rights capable of being capitalised for their market value. This viewpoint argued that ‘oppressive regulation’ would stifle crofting. The Scottish Crofting Foundation used this language in response to the initial legislative proposals of the SNP government in 2009.¹⁷⁴ The contrary view was that the operation of the market made it difficult for aspirant crofters to break into the system, thereby perpetuating a series of social and economic divisions which were compounded by absenteeism. The growth in the market for croft tenancies, something unforeseen in 1886, and the introduction of individual right to buy, had brought the market into the regulated crofting system in a way which was corrosive of the original principles upon which the system was based. The demand for houses as second and holiday homes also provided a financial incentive for croft houses and house sites to be decrofted and sold on the open market.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² *Committee of Inquiry on Crofting: Final Report* at <http://www.croftinginquiry.org/Resource/Doc/0/0000405.pdf>

¹⁷³ *Committee of Inquiry on Crofting: Final Report*, 64; Letter from Michael Otter of Kinlochbervie to *Herald*, 3 Aug. 2009, 14.

¹⁷⁴ *Herald*, 14 Jul. 2009, 4.

¹⁷⁵ *Herald*, 10 Aug. 2009, 11, 12; Professor James Hunter, former director of the Scottish Crofters Union and Chairman of HIE, had argued that a tax on absenteeism be levied at a rate significant enough to provide an incentive to reside on the croft, see *Herald*, 20 Jan. 2010.

An act of the Scottish Parliament was passed in 2010 but it did not follow closely the recommendations of the Shucksmith report and does not really address the problems that he raised. Three important areas are covered by this Act. The first is to abolish the Crofters Commission established in 1955 following the Taylor Commission and composed of appointed members. It is replaced by a Crofting Commission composed of nine members, six of whom are elected by crofters. Among the Commission's duties, in addition to regulation, is the promotion of the interests of crofting and having regard to the desirability of population retention. Second, the Commission oversees a Crofting Register which covers both in-by land and common grazings. From a historical point of view the third area, the duties of crofters, is the most interesting. This has always been part of the system of security of tenure going back to 1886 but it is given more emphasis in the current act. The crofter's duties include maintaining the agricultural and environmental condition of the croft. The insertion of environmental language and practice into crofting legislation is continued with the interesting clause which exempts a crofter from charges of neglect if the reason for refraining from activity for the purpose of conserving the natural beauty or the flora and fauna of the locality. There is also a clear clause about the vexed issue of residency which has been so controversial since 1911. The current act states clearly that crofters must reside within 32km of their crofts.¹⁷⁶ These are worthy reforms but they do not address the current difficulties faced by the crofting system nor do they address the wider issues in highland society, especially the shortage of affordable housing.

Contemporary Land Reform

¹⁷⁶ Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2010/14/contents>

The importance of crofting to the structure of land tenure in the highlands is significant but there are many wider issues. Over the course of the period since the 1880s the context, objectives and mechanisms of land reform have changed markedly. In the period from the 1880s to the 1920s, as we have seen, the debate was characterised by a discussion about the role of the private landowner and governments were concerned about social and political order. The Irish dimension of land reform even added concerns about the coherence of the state. Land reform was seen as a mechanism for stabilising difficult situations. It was not viewed primarily in economic terms. The resolution of this phase of activity in Scotland came with the effective 'nationalisation' of large tracts of the highlands in the 1920s. The state had a new role: that of landowner. This was mostly in the crofting areas where the role of the landowner was circumscribed by the regulations inherent in the crofting system and the intervention of bodies such as the Scottish Land Court. Although this engendered fierce loyalty among the tenants of the state it provided a rather static form of land tenure, although perhaps not to the same degree as in Ireland where the process of land purchase meant that the system of large privately-owned estates was replaced by one of a vast multiplicity of privately-owned holdings. The partition of the island of Ireland in 1922, however, meant that this dimension of land reform no longer had such an effect on the Scottish case although very significant land reform continued under the new Irish state. Indeed, it has recently been argued that the work of the Irish Land Commission was one of the defining forces which shaped Irish society after 1922. Land had been central to the politics of Irish nationalism during the period from 1879 to 1921 and it remained vital to the politics of the new state. Compared to Scotland the schemes for purchase, subdivision, migration and resettlement

were on a vast scale and continued for over fifty years after independence. Land and the debates over policy related to it remained vital in the division between Cummann na nGaedheal (and later Fine Gael) and Fianna Fáil. By the 1950s, however, the Irish Land Commission faced many of the same problems which the Taylor Commission would identify in Scotland. The extent to which the right people had been settled on the right land for them and for the country as a whole was a pertinent question. Similarly, the question of aged farmers finding it difficult to work their land effectively but being tied to it because of the house was common to Ireland and the crofting areas. Irish governments, of both parties and coalitions, returned again and again to legislate on the land question.¹⁷⁷ The attempts to reform the crofting system in the 1960s and 1970s demonstrated clearly that crofters were not particularly interested in private ownership of their individual holdings, the form of landholding which dominated in Ireland. In this respect little had changed from the days of the CDB in the early twentieth century.

Further indication of this continuity came in the 1990s when the then Conservative government proposed to transfer the estates under the control of the Secretary of State to Trusts composed of the tenants. The fact that the crofters did not take advantage of this offer reflected the deep suspicion of the Conservative government as well as an awareness of the benefits of state ownership. Some figures associated with the crofting community, especially the director of the Scottish Crofters' Union, James Hunter, argued

¹⁷⁷ The literature is considerable but Terence M. Dooley, *'The Land for the People': The Land Question in Independent Ireland* (Dublin, 2004) is a superb analysis which restores the politics of land to its rightful place in the post-1922 history of Ireland; see also Terence M. Dooley, 'Land and politics in independent Ireland, 1933–48: the case for reappraisal', *Irish Historical Studies*, 34 (2004), 175–97; David Seth Jones, *Graziers, Land Reform, and Political Conflict in Ireland* (Washington DC, 1995), 209–28; David Seth Jones, 'Divisions within the Irish government over land-distribution policy, 1940–70', *Eire-Ireland*, 36 (2001), 83–109; M.A.G. Ó'Tuathaigh, 'The land question, politics and Irish society, 1922–60' in P.J. Drudy (ed.), *Ireland: Land, Politics and People* (Cambridge, 1982), 167–87.

that this was an opportunity to acquire control of an important asset. This controversy first emerged in the summer of 1989 when the Scottish Office Minister with responsibility for the highlands and islands, Lord Sanderson of Bowden, spoke at the annual conference of the SCU. He pointed out that the Secretary of State ‘would be glad to dispose of his estate to crofting tenants but there has been a marked reluctance to take up the offer’. There was also a veiled threat in his remarks: ‘crofters cannot expect their special privileges to be indefinitely surrounded by a ring fence – a most appropriate metaphor’.¹⁷⁸ The idea of transferring the crofting estates out of public ownership fitted the general ideological approach of the Conservative government of this period. Government consultation proposed a pilot scheme in Skye and Raasay where there were over 600 crofts on estates purchased between 1904 and the early 1920s. There was a discussion about the financing of transfer and the options included using the 1976 formula of purchase at fifteen times the annual rent, thereby saddling the new trusts with substantial debts; or transferring the land at no cost but largely withdrawing the various forms of support accorded to the tenants.¹⁷⁹ This was all intensely controversial. The enthusiasm of the SCU for the proposals was the basis for dissension in that organisation, with some members even preferring ‘wholesale owner occupancy’ under the 1976 act to the idea of locally-run trusts.¹⁸⁰ By late 1991 the government announced that they did not intend to pursue the scheme on the grounds that there was insufficient support for it among the tenants who would be affected.¹⁸¹ Although this ‘offer’ from the government

¹⁷⁸ The text of Lord Sanderson’s speech was published in *The Crofter*, June 1989, 6; this publication was the newspaper of the Scottish Crofters Union, the title is an echo of the newspaper of the Highland Land Law Reform Association published in the 1880s.

¹⁷⁹ *WHFP*, 9 Mar. 1990.

¹⁸⁰ *WHFP*, 3 Aug. 1990.

¹⁸¹ *WHFP*, 6 Dec. 1991.

was imperfect due to lack of information and it was in some respects a missed opportunity, there is also a historical significance. The reluctance of some tenants to take advantage of the 'offer' indicated satisfaction with the state as a landlord. There might also have been an updated version of the thinking which took place in Kilmuir after its purchase by the CDB in 1904. There may have been a feeling that ownership through a Trust did not represent much advance on the current situation and that state ownership represented effective crofter ownership. The difficulty with that argument was contained in the implied threats issued by ministers that the estates could be 'privatised'. Looking forward, however, there is also another important point. During the discussions about the DAFS estates there were suggestions that the idea of community ownership through trusts might be a model which could apply to privately-owned estates as well. At the same time as the discussion of the fate of the DAFS estates was taking place, the Dalmore estate on the island of Lewis came onto the market.¹⁸² The suggestion was made that the 1976 Act could be used to acquire community-ownership of in-bye and common grazing land. This was only an option, however, because the whole estate was under crofting tenure.¹⁸³ Another intriguing suggestion was the notion of a single trust for the ownership of all croft land in the seven crofting counties.¹⁸⁴ Another estate on Wester Ross, also on the market at this point, could not have been subject to this approach, even if the context had been right for its adoption, as it was mostly under sporting use.¹⁸⁵ Although this debate did not lead to a transfer of the DAFS estates, it served a purpose in raising the idea of community land-ownership. Clearly, with a Conservative government

¹⁸² *WHFP*, 12 Apr. 1991.

¹⁸³ See letter from Jim Hunter, *WHFP*, 19 Apr. 1991.

¹⁸⁴ See letter from Angus MacLeod, Stornoway, *WHFP*, 10 Aug 1990.

¹⁸⁵ *WHFP*, 21 Jun. 1991, the same issue reports the fact that the Garynahine estate was also on the market, for the second time in two years.

in power the position was not promising but with the disposal of Mrs Thatcher as Prime Minister in November 1990 and the requirement for a general election by the spring of 1992 there was, for the first time in over a decade, a chance that the context might change.

The fact that land reform was in legislative abeyance for a generation meant that when it came back onto the agenda in a concerted way in the 1990s there were new ideas in play. The principal development was the idea of communities acting in concert to gain access to the land, as the land raiders of the inter-war period did, but remaining in communal mode when they acquired the land. This began to occur in a number of significant cases from the 1990s. Although community land-ownership can be traced back to the creation of the Stornoway Trust in 1923 or even the purchase by its crofting tenants from the CDB of the Glendale estate in 1904, the idea came of age in the 1990s when five further communities acted to purchase the land on which they lived and significant publicity was accorded to their cases.¹⁸⁶ There were also significant continuities: the Scottish legal code provided the private landowner with enormous power; and land was still changing hands with little reference to the residents. A further interesting feature was the way in which a wider consensus emerged that solutions to social and economic problems need not necessarily come from the state, although its resources might be required to implement ideas generated by other agencies.

¹⁸⁶ Sarah Skerratt, *Community Land Ownership and Community Resilience*, Rural Policy Centre Research Report, June 2011, 5.

The election of a Labour government in 1997 and the advent of a Scottish Parliament in 1999 gave impetus to land reform. Much of the rhetoric recognised the historical dimension but events ‘on the ground’ helped to give it greater force.¹⁸⁷ The first case which helped to bring the issue back to public prominence arose, appropriately enough given the county’s history, in Sutherland. In 1992 the crofters of Assynt, led by highly articulate and effective campaigners such as Bill Ritchie, John MacKenzie and Allan MacRae, were able to raise enough money to buy the North Lochinver estate when it was put on the market by the liquidators of the Scandinavian company which had purchased it only three years earlier. This move was made possible by their threat to take advantage of the right to buy at a substantial discount under the 1976 Act. This helped to scare off potential purchasers and open the field for the crofter buyout. The Assynt buy-out was helped by the fact that there was an active branch of the Scottish Crofters Union in the area and participation in its activities had given the principals experience and connections of the kind required to run an effective campaign.¹⁸⁸ The sale particulars published by the agents marketing the estate referred to its mountain terrain and suggested that ‘man himself is alien in this landscape’.¹⁸⁹ The crofters sought to demonstrate that this was not the case. The fact that the estate was in liquidation was also significant in that it was not likely to be taken off the market as a response to the actions of the crofters. The financial breakdown of a landed estate, so often the vehicle for clearance in the 1850s, was now

¹⁸⁷ Ewen A. Cameron, ‘Unfinished Business: The Land Question and the New Scottish Parliament’, *Contemporary British History*, 15 (2001), 83–114.

¹⁸⁸ Isobel MacPhail, ‘Land, crofting and the Assynt Crofters Trust: a post-colonial geography’, unpublished PhD thesis (University of Wales, Lampeter, 2002), 261–406.

¹⁸⁹ Quoted in James Hunter, *From the Low Tide of the Sea to the Highest Mountain Tops: Community Ownership of Land in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Kershader, 2012), 54; MacPhail, ‘Land, crofting and the Assynt Crofters Trust’, 274–7.

providing possibilities for crofters to acquire land.¹⁹⁰ Those at the forefront of the Assynt campaign drew on historical examples to illustrate and inspire their work. In particular, extracts from Iain Fraser Grigor's book about the crofters' protests of the 1880s were read at difficult points in the struggle as a reminder of the indefatigability of the campaigners of the 1880s. At the moment of victory, when the land had been purchased, the outcome was suggested as being a step towards rectification of the principal weakness of the Act of 1886: its failure to restore land to the crofters.¹⁹¹ Once again the shadow of the events of the 1880s was cast over contemporary developments.

A further noteworthy aspect of the Assynt case was the reliance on public campaigning to raise money for the eventual purchase price of £300,000. In quick order around £130,000 was raised. This provided an incentive for the Highland Regional Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to provide financial assistance. The support of the latter was significant: this was public money from an official body. Nevertheless, although the unusual set of circumstances worked in favour of the Assynt crofters they also helped, by default, to make the case that a legislative framework was required. Other communities could not rely on the same unusual circumstances.¹⁹²

This strength of this point can be seen in the recent history of the Island of Eigg. For twenty years until 1995 the island was owned by an English businessman, Keith

¹⁹⁰ Stephen P. Walker, 'Agents of dispossession and acculturation: Edinburgh accountants and the highland clearances', *Critical Perspectives in Accounting*, 14 (2003),

¹⁹¹ Iain Fraser Grigor, *Mightier than a Lord: The Highland Crofters Struggle for the Land* (Stornoway, 1979); MacPhail, 'Land, crofting and the Assynt Crofters Trust', 377, 389–90.

¹⁹² John MacAskill, *We Have Won The Land: The story of the purchase by the Assynt Crofters' Trust of the North Lochinver Estate* (Stornoway, 1999).

Schellenberg, who became deeply unpopular by his uncooperative attitude to the inhabitants. The local MP argued that the government should intervene to purchase Eigg and manage it in the manner of Scottish Natural Heritage on Rum or the National Trust for Scotland on Canna, or at least underwrite a community buy-out. The local councillor, Dr Michael Foxley, argued that the local authority, Highland Council (the two tier system of Regions and Districts having been abolished since the Assynt purchase), buy the island. In a response which indicates the sterility of the debate at this point, George Kynoch, the Scottish Office Minister concerned, deprecated government intervention and suggested that 'It is, of course, open to any community to bid to acquire an estate in the same way as any other party'.¹⁹³ Indeed, Schellenberg sold the island to a bizarre German artist, Marlin Eckhart, alias 'Maruma', who, despite lavish promises of investment, asset stripped the island. As it became clear that the new owner had nothing constructive to offer, the public campaign begun by the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust in 1991 accelerated and resulted in a community buy out of the island in April 1997 when one of the owner's creditors forced a sale. The purchase price of £1.5 million was much higher than in Assynt in 1992. A substantial portion of the sum came from a single donation of £750,000 from an anonymous donor in the north of England.¹⁹⁴ Again, this helped to establish the case for a legislative framework before 'Highland land fatigue' set in. A further point which has been made by those who are not convinced by the need for land reform, is that community owners 'may exercise their stewardship no more wisely than an individual owner'. It has been suggested that community buyouts only lead to

¹⁹³ *House of Commons Debates*, 6th Series, vol. 276, cols. 1110–1117, 1 May 1996.

¹⁹⁴ Alistair McIntosh, *Soil and Soul: People versus Corporate Power* (London, 2001), 131–47, 170–95, 262–78; Camille Dressler, *Eigg: The Story of an Island* (Edinburgh, 1998), 147–193; Hunter, *From the Low Tide of the Sea*, 83–99.

dependence on the state and public money.¹⁹⁵ The response of land reformers would be that large farms, and landed estates are also in receipt of extensive subsidies, often of a much greater value than the public money which has been devoted to buy outs.

A final case which demonstrates the way in which the idea of community ownership took root in the 1990s is the purchase by the Knoydart Foundation of the iconic estate of that name. Knoydart was a *cause celebre* in the late 1940s when, under the ownership of Nazi-sympathiser Lord Brocket, a land raid took place in 1948 to draw attention to conditions on the estate.¹⁹⁶ The estate had recently been afflicted by faceless corporate ownership and for many years in the 1980s and 1990s the people who lived in Knoydart had difficulty establishing who their landlord was. Like Assynt, Knoydart was marketed as a ‘wilderness’:

. . . it is in many ways like an island, the peace and tranquillity of its ancient isolation are the rare qualities that are the very essence and romance of Knoydart. Bonnie Prince Charlie is reputed to have travelled these parts as a fugitive after the Battle of Culloden in 1746 and Knoydart today is much as he would have seen it then, unspoilt and destined to remain so.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Alan Massie, ‘Facing Highland Reality’, *Scotsman*, 19 Nov. 1997; Ian Mitchell, *Isles of the West* (Edinburgh, 1999), 209–14.

¹⁹⁶ Ewen A. Cameron, ‘The Seven Men of Knoydart and the Scottish Highlands in the 1940s’, *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 62 (2001–3), 156–83; Archie MacDougall, *Knoydart: The Last Scottish Land Raid*, (Billingham, 1993).

¹⁹⁷ Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, Library, D6.23 KNO (P), ‘The Knoydart Estate’, Sale Brochure, published in September 1991 by Brodies, a firm of Edinburgh solicitors.

All this is despite its long human history and the fact that the residents saw a future in the community.¹⁹⁸ While the process of raising money involved donations from anonymous well-wishers, London theatre impresarios, negotiations with the banks and involvement from conservation charities such as the John Muir Trust and the Chris Brasher Trust, there was a significant development in the Knoydart narrative. In June 1997 HIE established a Community Land Unit which would be funded from European Union and UK-government sources. This body contributed £75,000 to the purchase of Knoydart by the Foundation.

These three cases with all their differences and twists and turns had an important political effect. They meant that when the Labour party returned to office in May 1997, after eighteen years out of power, committed to the establishment of a Scottish Parliament land reform was a current issue of debate in Scottish politics. Much land reform, however, had taken place before the Labour government was elected, the Scottish Parliament convened or the Land Reform (Scotland) Act passed in 2003. To a large extent legislation was driven by the political momentum created by pre-existing community buy-outs such as those in Assynt or Eigg. It might be thought odd that a party, Labour, which has its political power base largely in urban Scotland should have made land reform a priority in taking office after devolution. There is, of course, a strong urban element to the history of land reform. Nevertheless, post-devolution land reform was discussed for the most part in a rural context. It has been suggested that land reform was a means by which the Scottish

¹⁹⁸ For a critique of the concept of the Highlands as a wilderness, see: J. Hunter, *The Other Side of Sorrow: Nature and People in the Scottish Highlands*, (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1995), 149–76.

Executive could address issues of social and economic development as well as sustainable development goals ‘with few short-term costs’.¹⁹⁹

While acknowledging the strength of the case that contemporary circumstances contributed to the making of policy there is also a strong historical dimension. A critique of private landownership is strongly embedded in the political traditions of the Labour party. The early Labour movement in Scotland emerged from the radical wing of the Liberal party and many of the pioneering figures – John Murdoch, Gavin Clark – had connections to the highlands. Even for those without this direct link, the highland land issue was important. Thomas Johnston, founding editor of *The Forward* and later Secretary of State for Scotland, emphasized the land question and the highland clearances in his journalism, historical writings and political rhetoric. In the 1960s the party used rhetoric about the highland past to justify its creation of the HIDB, albeit that body had a very limited effect on the land question.

Another increasingly important feature of the pattern of landownership in the highlands is the increasing role of conservation charities as proprietors. This theme has developed markedly since the 1930s. Scottish Natural Heritage has substantial landholdings, especially on the Isle of Rum, and the RSBP controls significant acreages in North Uist and elsewhere. The debate over this form of landownership has been as polarized as that over traditional private landownership. Critics argue that these charitable organizations are, essentially, a new form of absentee landowner with the key decisions being taken in

¹⁹⁹ Janet Laible, ‘The Scottish Parliament and its capacity for redistributive policy: the case of land reform’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 61 (2008), 166.

Edinburgh or London. Those that have the protection of fauna as their key purpose are criticized for caring more about the birds and animals on their estates than the people who live there.²⁰⁰ In addition, there is probably less chance of these estates coming on to the market than in the case of a private landowner who might die, be declared bankrupt or change their priorities. Defenders argue that there is a greater chance of long-term strategic decision making and that conservation objectives will be furthered if there is a healthy relationship with the residents of the estates.²⁰¹

Perhaps the most extreme case of this form of land ownership is that of the island of Rum. This island was cleared comprehensively in the 1820s and lay derelict for many years until it was purchased by the Nature Conservancy Council (forerunner of SNH) in 1957. Until very recently SNH dominated the island, the population was dependant on them for employment and housing. The case of Rum is unusual in that it proved to be possible for SNH to transfer some of their land to the ‘community’ at less than market value, something which has proved very difficult in other cases of land in the public sector.

The political process was important part in the new phase of Scottish land reform. In February 1998 the Land Reform Policy Group (LRPG) published *Identifying the Problems*.²⁰² The process began prior to the creation of the Scottish parliament in 1999. This, it has been suggested, was because there were land reformers, such as Brian

²⁰⁰ Ian Mitchell, *Isles of the West: A Hebridean Voyage* (Edinburgh, 1999).

²⁰¹ Charles R. Warren and Annie McKee, ‘The Scottish revolution? Evaluating the impacts of post-devolution land reform’, *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 127 (2011), 33; Trevor Croft, ‘Conservation charity land ownership in Scotland’, *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 120 (2004), 71–82.

²⁰² LRPG, *Identifying the Problems* was published in February 1998.

Wilson, who were opposed to devolution and sceptical that the new parliament was the best vehicle for land reform.²⁰³ The document was different to the historical view of land reform: it was couched in the language of providing opportunities for individuals and communities and ensuring more sustainable approaches to the environment.²⁰⁴ The Group presented the case for land reform in Scotland as based on two areas: concentration of landownership and the structure of the Scottish legal code in relation to land.²⁰⁵ Probably the most fundamental statement in the document was the proposal to sweep away the feudal basis of Scottish land law: ‘In its first session, the Scottish Parliament will be able to abolish the feudal system and replace it with a system of outright ownership of land’.²⁰⁶ The process of consultation which followed the publication of *Identifying the Problems* produced the more comprehensive and prescriptive *Identifying the Solutions*.²⁰⁷

The key elements were:

increased diversity in the way land is owned and used, as the best way of dealing with damage to the local community or environment which can result from monopoly ownership, and of encouraging the fullest possible exploitation of rural development opportunities; and increased community involvement in the way land is used, so as to ensure that local people are not excluded from decisions which affect their lives and the lives of their communities.

²⁰³ Hunter, *From the Low Tide*, 111.

²⁰⁴ LRPG, *Problems*, section 2.

²⁰⁵ LRPG, *Problems*, sections 3–8

²⁰⁶ LRPG, *Problems*, section 7.

²⁰⁷ LRPG, *Identifying the Solutions* was published in September.

The next stage in the process was the third publication of the LRPG, *Recommendations for Action*, in January 1999.²⁰⁸ These were more radical than some commentators anticipated.²⁰⁹ Lord Sewel, Chairman of LRPG, pointed out in the Foreword: ‘we need to sweep away outdated land laws which have no place in modern society’. A further objective, and one which has been articulated at every stage in the process, is the removal of ‘land based barriers to the sustainable development of rural communities’. Two further proposals included building in time to assess the public interest when major properties change hands, and giving communities the right to buy their land if the owner was selling it and at a price set by a government appointed valuer. To be allowed to exercise this power such community bodies would ‘have to demonstrate that they were representative of and supported by the local community, had the sustainable development of that community as their primary object, and were properly constituted’ and can provide the necessary funds. The issue of establishing credentials for ‘sustainable development’ has been difficult and can be read as an obstacle to buy-outs. Definitions of ‘sustainable development’ have changed as administrations of different political hues have attempted to implement the Act. It is certainly the case that part 2 of the 2003 Act has not proved to be a force for the transformation of the land issue in Scotland.²¹⁰ As will be discussed below the concept of ‘community’ is central to the proposals and the wider debate but is not very well defined.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ LRPG, *Recommendations for Action*.

²⁰⁹ ‘Scotland: Lairds and land’, *The Economist*, 9 Jan 1999.

²¹⁰ Aylwin Pillai, ‘Sustainable rural communities: a legal perspective on the community right to buy’, *Land Use Policy*, 27 (2010), 898–905.

²¹¹ LRPG, *Recommendations*, section 3.

In 2003 the *Land Reform (Scotland) Act* was passed by the Scottish parliament signifying its greater capability of dealing with outstanding Scottish grievances compared to Westminster. Ross Finnie, the Liberal Democrat Minister for Environment and Rural Development, made this point in introducing the Bill:

In the past 60 years, land reform did not get on to the Westminster Parliamentary agenda, although it has consistently been on the agenda of the people of Scotland. There is no doubt that devolution and the creation of the Scottish Parliament have brought forward land reform. The vast majority of those who voted in the Scottish parliamentary elections in 1999 did so for parties whose manifestos included a commitment to legislate on land reform.²¹²

The act which emerged in 2003 from a very long legislative process was designed to achieve three objectives: to create right of responsible access to land; to allow rural communities to buy land when it is put on the market; to allow crofting communities to buy land at any time. While much of the debate was conducted in general terms the final objective indicates that the existence of the crofting system means that there is still an element of highland exceptionalism in Scottish land reform, although it was unusual for proposals about crofting to be contained in a bill with a wider purpose. While communities in lowland Scotland were given the right to register a pre-emptive interest in purchasing if the land they lived on came onto the market, the crofting community was given a more straightforward right to buy. A further point of interest was reference to the ‘crofting community’, as distinct from those who have the legal status of a crofter. It was

²¹² Official Report, Scottish Parliament, 20 Mar. 2002, col. 10380

recognized that if the right to buy was extended only to the latter group their rights could be exercised in a monopolistic way contrary to the interests of the wider group of people who live in the wider crofting community. Indeed, crofters, in the strict legal sense, might be a minority in such a community. Although some of the provisions lack precise definition this legislation is a belated recognition that the pattern of tenure in crofting communities is not confined to crofts.²¹³

The legislation and the subsequent slowdown of the momentum towards community buyouts disappointed some of the prominent advocates of land reform. Overall, however, the combination of political interest in land reform and the rise of community land-ownership indicated that in parts of Scotland there is recognition that land cannot solely be seen as an economic commodity in a free market and, in any case, the land market is imperfect.²¹⁴ The nature of the tactics used by the Assynt crofters showed that the rights inherent in crofting legislation could be used to limit the freedom of the market in land but crofting is confined to certain geographical areas and not every community, even in the highlands, could deploy this approach.

Community land-ownership, especially in the Hebrides, has provided some evidence that social and cultural attitudes to land can take precedence over its economic value.²¹⁵

²¹³ John MacAskill, 'The crofting community right to buy in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003', *Scottish Affairs*, no 49 (Autumn 2004), 104–33; Nicole Busby and Calum MacLeod, 'Rural identity in the twenty-first century: a community of crofters or crofting communities', *Journal of Law and Society*, 37 (2010), 592–619.

²¹⁴ Douglas C. MacMillan, 'An economic case for land reform', *Land Use Policy*, 17 (2000), 49–57, began to raise these questions prior to the passage of land reform legislation.

²¹⁵ A. Fiona D. MacKenzie, 'A working land: crofting communities, place and the politics of the possible in post-Land Reform Scotland', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, new ser. 31 (2006),

Community land-ownership has developed significantly from the pioneering ventures of the Assynt Crofters and the campaigns over Eigg and Knoydart. In Argyll the island of Gigha was purchased by the community who lived there in 2002. This is an instructive case in that for many years the Horlick family seemed to be an example of benign proprietorship but they were followed by a rapid succession of landlords with little commitment or interest in the island and the society of the place, at least measured by population and school rolls, began to decay. There had been reluctance to attempt a community buyout and opportunities had been missed prior to 2002 due to lack of confidence.²¹⁶ In particular it has become a major element of landownership in the Hebrides. From the Galson Estate in the north of Lewis to South Uist there are a range of extensive community-owned estates in an area of Scotland once dominated by privately owned sporting estates. Galson is a 56,000 acre crofting and sporting estate which was purchased under part 3 of the Land Reform Act in 2004.²¹⁷ The North Harris Trust's purchase of 55,000 acres in 2002 is also significant in that there was a cooperative and popular landlord, Jonathan Bulmer, who was willing to do business with the local community but also because of a sensible decision taken by the Trust. They decided that the Amhuinnsuidhe Castle and sporting interests were likely to be a burden on the finances of any successful buyout. They cooperated with a businessman, Ian Scarr-Hall, who was interested in Amhuinnsuidhe, to make a joint bid. The North Harris Trust paid £2.2million for the remainder of the estate. The money came from the Scottish Land

383–98; A. Fiona D. MacKenzie, *Places of Possibility: Property, Nature and Community Land Ownership* (Oxford, 2013).

²¹⁶ Catherine Czerkawaska, *God's Islanders: A History of the People of Gigha* (Edinburgh, 2006); Brian Wilson, 'At last Gigha is freed from the petty power of the big house', *West Highland Free Press*, 21 Mar. 2002. <http://www.gigha.org.uk/index.php>

²¹⁷ <http://www.galsontrust.com/#>

Fund and HIE.²¹⁸ At the Southern end of the Hebrides is, at 93,000 acres, the biggest of the estates which have come into Community ownership. Stòras Uibhist acquired ownership in 2006, their negotiations assisted by the progress of the Land Reform Bill with its crofting right to buy provisions. In contrast to North Harris, Stòras Uibhist took on the sporting lodges and other assets and have used them to generate income. There was also investment in the Askernish golf course, designed by old Tom Morris at the invitation of Lady Gordon Cathcart in the 1890s. This was the subject of a case in the Scottish Land Court when several crofters objected to their common grazings being used for the extension to the golf course. The matter was settled by compromise prior to the SLC's hearing on the case.²¹⁹ This is a small indication that Community Ownership faces the difficulty of managing the different interests in operation on an estate of this size. Indeed, the size of the Community-owned estates in the Hebrides presents a challenge to the very notion of 'community'. The process of election to the governing bodies of the estates is a stark contrast to the way in which private estates are run and provides a structure for the different interests to be represented.

There is now an organization, Community Land Scotland, that aims to represent the 25,000 people who live on the 500,000 acres of land under Community Ownership.²²⁰ These estates and their recent histories are diverse and caution has to be exercised in using this as a model to 'crack' the highland land question. The decade-long struggle over the Pairc estate in Lewis shows that, as in the aftermath of the acts of 1911 and

²¹⁸ Hunter, *From the Low Tide of the Sea*, 140–9.

²¹⁹ Hunter, *From the Low Tide of the Sea*, 159–67, *Press and Journal*, 14 May 2009; <http://askernishgolfclub.com/index.php>

²²⁰ <http://www.communitylandscotland.org.uk/index.php/home/2>; *West Highland Free Press*, 7 Sep. 2012, 5, for a profile of David Cameron the chair of Community Land Scotland.

1919, that there are extensive legal loopholes which can be exploited by landowners. Nevertheless, the community-owned estates cannot, and do not, exist in an economic vacuum. The books have to be balanced in the process of developing new housing or renewable-energy projects, to take two examples of tasks which have been central to the finances of the community-owned estates. There is a historical element to some of the rhetoric surrounding community landownership. The process is sometimes presented as being part of a ‘recovery from the clearances’ or, in a more nuanced way, part of the long process which encompasses clearance, the achievement of security of tenure in the 1880s and the work of land settlement, especially after the Great War.²²¹ There are two interesting points arising from this. The first is the extent to which this change of the form of ownership can bear this historical weight given the cultural and psychological consequences of the clearances. One author has recently described the notion that it can as ‘humbug’.²²² The second is the way in which this conceptualization of community ownership, entirely understandable in places like Harris or South Uist, presents a narrative which is, in fact, limiting. There is danger that Community Ownership, at least on this scale, becomes confined to the highlands where this narrative can be deployed. The difficulties of extending it in a meaningful way to more valuable lowland estates, where the difficulties arising from ineffective stewardship may be profound, are likely to be considerable.

²²¹ See Angus MacMillan, ‘Stòras Uibhist: recovering from the clearances’, 179–89 and David Cameron, ‘Recovering from the clearances: land ownership’, 191–204, both in Ewen A. Cameron (ed.), *Recovering from the Clearances: Land Struggle, Resettlement, and Community Ownership in the Hebrides* (Kershaider, 2013).

²²² James Kelman, ‘Clearance and eviction in South Lochs: a personal exploration’, in Cameron (ed.), *Recovering from the Clearances*, 242.

Land Reform is an ongoing process in devolved Scotland. Given the SNP's rhetoric on this question over the course of the post-war period considerable expectations were generated when that party entered government in 2007. Hampered by their lack of a majority until 2011, there was little activity on this front from Alex Salmond's government. As one long-time advocate of land reform argued in 2012 'the land question may have been filed away by Holyrood but it is still very much alive in the real world'.²²³ The original Scottish Land Fund was terminated in 2006 and funding for community buyouts was to come from the Big Lottery Fund under its Growing Community Assets programme. In fact, no funding was forthcoming from this source, the main reason for the stalling of the Community Land Ownership movement in the mid 2000s. The Scottish government took action in 2012 to re-establish the Scottish Land Fund but the cash at its disposal – £1m in its first year, rising to £3m in its third year – is not especially generous when one considers that the Board of Agriculture for Scotland had access to £2.5m in 1919.²²⁴

Since 2012 there has been increased activity on the land question. This was initiated by the appointment of the Land Reform Review Group by the Scottish government. This group initially included the historian and land-reform campaigner Professor James Hunter but he resigned before the publication of the Group's interim Report in May 2013. The Group's remit was:

²²³ Brian Wilson, 'Let's hand the land to the people', *Scotsman*, 14 Mar. 2012, 29.

²²⁴ David Ross, 'Taking control of a vital asset', *Glasgow Herald*, 18 Dec. 2012, 19.

- a. Enable more people in rural and urban Scotland to have a stake in the ownership, governance, management and use of land, which will lead to a greater diversity of land ownership, and ownership types, in Scotland.
- b. Assist with the acquisition and management of land (and also land assets) by communities, to make stronger, more resilient, and independent communities which have an even greater stake in their development.
- c. Generate, support, promote and deliver new relationships between land, people, economy and environment in Scotland.²²⁵

The tone of the report was extraordinarily cautious and seemed to duck a series of important issues, not least the question of whether farm tenants should be offered the same automatic right to buy that was accorded to crofters in 1976. The excuse given was that their remit ‘focuses on communities rather than relationships between individuals’.²²⁶ It was this approach which led Brian Wilson, former Labour minister and veteran campaigner on the land question to describe the report as ‘the most useless 52 pages ever committed to print’.²²⁷ There are few areas in which this report can be compared to the Napier Commission of 1884 but the continuing capacity of land-related issues to reveal social tension and inequalities of power were revealed in the report. Some farm tenants ‘indicated that they were fearful of speaking at open meetings, or even of putting their concerns on paper, because of the possible recriminations should their landlord hear they

²²⁵ Land Reform Review Group [LRRG], *Interim Report* (May, 2013), 2. The report can be read at <http://ruralgateway.org.uk/sites/default/files/interim%20report.pdf>

²²⁶ LRRG, *Interim Report*, 21.

²²⁷ *West Highland Free Press*, 24 May 2013.

were expressing these views in public'.²²⁸ The existence of such a situation would seem to indicate a need for land reform. The report, however, is devoid of any appreciation of the historical context of land reform and uncomprehending of why there might be a controversy about land issues. The adverse comment on the interim report led the Scottish Government to expand the group.²²⁹ At the time of writing the report is expected in April 2014. One useful service which the LRRG did perform was, through the submissions to it, to reveal the extent to which the weaknesses of the Land Reform Act of 2003 are widely felt.²³⁰

In an interesting constitutional development the next stage in the re-heating of the debate on the land question in Scotland came from the Scottish Affairs Select Committee of the House of Commons under the convenorship of the Glasgow Labour MP Ian Davidson. They were stimulated to think about the wide range of issues relating to land reform by their experience of reporting on the Crown Estate Commission. The committee commissioned a briefing paper and this has stimulated a great deal of debate. Written by James Hunter, Peter Peacock, Andy Wightman and Michael Foxley, *432:50 – Towards a Comprehensive Land Reform Agenda for Scotland* is a striking document. It seeks to tap into wider concerns about inequality of status and treatment in an age of austerity. The title is a reference to the ownership of 50 per cent of Scotland's privately-owned land by 432 persons. The report goes on to point out:

²²⁸ LRRG, *Interim Report*, 14.

²²⁹ *Herald*, 6 Jun. 2013.

²³⁰ Submissions to the LRRG can be read at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/07/2790/0>

...there are large transfers of public money from the state to the 432 owners – in the shape, for example, of agricultural subsidies (worth more than £1million annually to some of the 432), forestry grants, nature conservation grants and other disbursements. Although there is beginning to be anger in some quarters about such largesse (much of it directed at people of great wealth) at a time of unprecedented stringency in other areas of public spending, those arrangements have attracted surprisingly little scrutiny and accordingly merit investigation by SAC.²³¹

Amongst the ideas suggested in this paper is one which would have been familiar to land reformers in the Victorian and Edwardian periods: Land Values Taxation. The paper has provoked polarized reactions. Douglas McAdam, head of Scottish Land and Estates (the organization formerly known as the Scottish Landowners' Federation) asserted that Hunter and his colleagues 'continually drag the debate backwards to their narrow agenda of wealth and property redistribution.'²³² Although a range of newspapers, from the *Daily Record* to the *Observer*, were more supportive, the latter was slightly confused about the cultural and historical context. An editorial remarked:

Painfully slowly, but surely nonetheless, the ancient and unearned privileges that have maintained the ownership of Scotland's wild and beautiful places in so few hands are being eroded. Many ordinary Scots are becoming more aware of what,

²³¹ Hunter, et. al, 432:50 – *Towards a Comprehensive Land Reform Agenda for Scotland: A Briefing Paper for the House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee* (July, 2013), 5. The report can be read at <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/scottish-affairs/432-Land%20Reform%20Paper.pdf>

²³² Michael Wigan, 'Scottish landowners feel the heat', *Country Life*, 2 Sep. 2013.

for centuries, had been the nation's big secret: that 432 landowners possess half for their country.²³³

This view perpetuates a range of romantic images and historical anachronisms about the Scottish land question. The reference to 'Scotland's wild and beautiful places' elides the fact that the land issue is not confined to the highlands. Indeed, it is relevant to urban areas, which are not covered by the Land Reform Act of 2003. The idea that Scotland's concentrated pattern of landownership is a 'dark secret' will come as news to those who have been campaigning on the land question over the past century and a half.

Despite the inadequacies of the LRRG's interim report, the uncertainty of what will develop from the Scottish Affairs Committee's investigation and the growing awareness of the flaws in the 2003 legislation it does appear that the debate over the land question, such an important part of highland history, politics and culture, is once again coming to the fore.

²³³ *Observer*, 11 Aug. 2013; see also *Daily Record*, 12 Jul. 2013 (if the genealogy of this newspaper is traced back a connection can be found with Dr Charles Cameron's *North British Daily Mail*, a strong supporter of the crofters in the 1880s); *West Highland Free Press*, 19 Jul. 2013.

Chapter Three.

Population Matters: Demography and Highland History.

Throughout the history of the modern highlands there has been a deep concern with the levels of population in the region. In the eighteenth century clan chiefs and later landlords aimed to maintain relatively high levels of population in the interests of healthy military recruitment. Attempts which were made in the first half of the eighteenth century to reform the structure of landholding were criticised if they compromised this objective. The plan drawn up by Duncan Forbes for the reallocation of lands on the Mull, Morvern and Tiree estates of the duke of Argyll were a case in point. The competitive bidding for land which underpinned this more commercial approach was deemed to have weakened the military backbone of the key Whig clan in the highlands, thus facilitating the early progress of the Jacobite rising which began in 1745.²³⁴ This ambition to retain population was sustained until the Napoleonic wars at least as the highlands became a nursery of imperial soldiery. In this context there was little fear of overpopulation, rather it was loss of population through emigration which was the principal fear. The clearances of this period, undoubtedly extensive and aimed directly at the eradication of traditional townships, nevertheless retained a view of the former residents of the baile as potentially productive in terms of military recruitment, harvesting of kelp or the development of the fishing industry. As such, their loss to the estate was to be deprecated. The activities of the now redundant tacksmen, emigration agents and characters such as Thomas Douglas,

²³⁴ Eric Cregeen, 'The tacksmen and their successors: a study of tenurial reorganisation in Mull, Morvern and Tiree in the early eighteenth century', *Scottish Studies*, 13 (1969), 93–114.

earl of Selkirk, in promoting the idea of departing for North America were seen as inimical to the strategies deployed by estate managers. This was the context in which the government commissioned Thomas Telford to report on the potential for the economic development of the highlands in order to stimulate employment and economic development in the region. Telford reported that the conversion of 'large districts of the country into extensive sheepwalks' was the 'most powerful' cause of emigration'. Although he did not believe the new economy was sustainable in the long run he noted that the short term effects were serious in demographic terms.

This not only requires much fewer people to manage the same track of country, but in general an entirely new people, who have been accustomed to this mode of life are brought from the southern parts of Scotland.²³⁵

The vast project to construct the Caledonian canal was the tangible result of this early scheme for government economic planning. The reluctance of government to intervene in the economy which was so characteristic of the mid-nineteenth century was less evident fifty years earlier. Telford argued that although imperial interests might seem to indicate that the expansion of sheep farming be encouraged in the interests of making the highlands economically productive there were demographic consequences which ought to be considered:

²³⁵ PP, 1802–3 (45), *A Survey and Report of the Coasts and Central Highlands of Scotland; made by the command of the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury, in the Autumn of 1802: by Thomas Telford, Civil Engineer, Edin. FRS*, 15.

The country will be depopulated, and that Race of People which has of late years maintained so honourable a share in the operations of our armies and navies will then be no more; that in a case where such a numerous body of the people are deeply interested, it is the duty of government to consider it as an extraordinary case, and one of those which justifies them in departing a little from the Maxims of general policy.²³⁶

Very quickly, however, the atmosphere changed. No sooner had the landlords successfully lobbied Westminster to pass the Passenger Vessels Act of 1803 to force up the cost of emigration than they realised that this was a mistake.²³⁷ The economic activities which provided them with an incentive to retain population ceased to be profitable over the next decade or so. Even Selkirk began to regret his advocacy of emigration and argued for a system which placed less emphasis on the highlands as a nursery of soldiery. New schemes of military recruitment in the later part of the war relied on the highlands to a much lesser extent than hitherto even before peace ended finally the lucrative possibilities of raising regiments.²³⁸ The end of the economic blockade brought rival sources of alkali into the market and undermined the kelp industry. Fishing no longer seemed a panacea as reforms of the taxation regime on the crucial substance of salt led to increased costs. These developments encouraged a view that high levels of population were no longer an asset but constituted a burden. There was also a change in the intellectual climate in thinking about population levels. The

²³⁶ *Survey and Report of the Coasts and Central Highlands of Scotland*, 16–17.

²³⁷ J. M. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America, 1770–1815* (Edinburgh, 1982), 129–54, 216–18.

²³⁸ Andrew Mackillop, *'More Fruitful than the Soil': Army, Empire and the Scottish Highlands, 1715–1815* (East Linton, 2000), 201.

publication in 1798 of the famous *Essay on Population* by the English clergyman Thomas Malthus had given pause for thought. Malthus asserted, in language reminiscent of the Old Testament, that overpopulation was a curse. He suggested that it was inevitable that a rapidly growing population would outstrip food supply and lead to disastrous famines. Although he moderated his views in the second and subsequent editions of his book, the general message that ‘overpopulation’ was harmful, was an influential one.²³⁹ It has often been assumed that the enthusiasm of highland landlords for emigration after 1815 was in line with, if not exactly directly inspired by, Malthusian notions. Malthus, however, did not see emigration as a solution to overpopulation unless it was combined with steps to eradicate the underlying forces which stimulated population increase.²⁴⁰ The political result was the move towards the dismantling of the regulations which governed the passenger trade. Further legislation of 1827 realised this aim. For the inhabitants of the highlands the outcome was worse still in an immediate sense. A new phase of clearance began in the period between the end of the war in 1815 and the outbreak of the famine in 1846. This was just as intensive as the earlier attempts to relocate population but it was motivated by the objective of reduction of absolute levels of population. Large numbers of people likely to suffer significant levels of poverty were likely to become an incubus on the finances of the estate and there was a renewed drive towards their emigration. The desired demographic outcome of estate management was inverted: falling levels of population were now seen as a positive feature.

²³⁹ E.A. Wrigley, ‘Malthus on the prospects for the labouring poor’, *Historical Journal*, 31 (1988), 813–829.

²⁴⁰ Eric Richards, ‘Highland emigration in the age of Malthus: Scourie, 1841–55’, *Northern Scotland*, new series, 2 (2011), 60–1.

This chapter will examine the demographic history of the highlands in the period since the middle of the nineteenth century. It will be divided into four parts. The first section will analyse the roots of course of population decline from the famine to the 1920s. This will be followed by an analysis of population decline in the period from the end of the 1920s to the 1970s. The third section will concentrate on the way in which commentators and policy-makers concentrated, even fixated, on population as a measure of the efficacy of policy and the health of the region. This will lead to the concluding section which will comment on recent assumptions about a turnaround in the relative demography of the highlands and the industrial lowlands, with the latter in seeming demographic retreat and the former experiencing a recovery in population according to the most optimistic voices. Throughout, there will be an attempt to recognise that the highlands cannot be considered as a monolithic whole in population terms and conditions differed markedly at the local and insular levels. Over the period considered here, from the late nineteenth century to the present day the quality of demographic statistics collected by the state improved dramatically, especially after the introduction of Civil Registration in Scotland in 1855 and the professionalisation of the census from 1861. Further, the depth and extent of historical analysis of population issues has developed strikingly over the same period. Nevertheless, demography, especially in the hands of the state, is not a neutral or objective matter. At various times the British state has been worried about relative underpopulation, low birth-rates and demographic stagnation; population statistics have been used to support a wide range of different ideological standpoints and policy positions. Demography became a particularly important tool in the management of a

racially diverse empire.²⁴¹ While the application of racial thought to the highlands was less evident in the twentieth century than in the nineteenth, there was, nevertheless, a notion that the depopulation of the region was at least partly due to the lethargy of the people who lived there. Had the population of the highlands taken more energetic advantage of the resources of the region the economic and demographic outlook would have been more optimistic.

The outbreak of famine in the highlands in 1846 seemed to bear out the worst fears of those who had adopted the most pessimistic of Malthusian notions. The sustained failure of the potato crop from 1846, however, encouraged highland landlords and government officials to see emigration as the policy which would prevent the return of the conditions which had created the crisis. Although emigration from the highlands was very considerable in the period from 1841 to 1861, especially in the latter half of that period, it was not a new feature. The loss of population during the famine and its immediate aftermath was profound in many areas of the highlands. In a number of areas, especially in the Hebrides, the bulk of loss through migration occurred in these years. In Uig in Lewis or South Uist nearly two thirds of the loss of population through migration took place in the famine decade. In some areas of the highlands there was, however, a rise in population levels after the famine. This reminds us that it is very dangerous to make generalisations about demographic patterns in the highlands. The area which was most affected was the Hebrides, especially the island of Lewis which did not reach its

²⁴¹ Anne Cameron, 'The establishment of civil registration in Scotland', *Historical Journal*, 50 (2007), 377–95; Karl Ittmann, 'Demography as policy science in the British Empire, 1918–69', *Journal of Policy History*, 15 (2003), 417–48; Robert W. Lee, 'The development of population history (historical demography) in Great Britain from the late nineteenth century to the early 1960s', *Historical Social Research*, 31 (2006), 34–63; RGS 150th Report.

maximum population levels until 1911. This brought its own problems as the island became the epitome of 'congestion' in the aftermath of the passage of the Crofters Act of 1886. In other areas, notably the parishes of the west coast of Ross and Inverness, the fall in population was steep in the famine period and continued in a downwards direction in the decades after the famine.²⁴² In the later nineteenth century these parishes were not characterised by congestion but by desolation. Emigration, however, is not the only factor which explains the decline in population suffered by highland counties. Some scholars stress changes in patterns of marriage as a central feature of demographic change. The thesis is that delayed marriage and a higher proportion of the population avoiding marriage altogether drove down the level of fertility in the highlands. This helps to explain patterns in some areas of the highlands, especially Sutherland, where the sex ratio (the number of males per 100 females in the population) was very low, and parts of western Inverness and Ross. In Lewis, Harris and Barra, on the other hand, population continued to increase after the famine, levels of fertility were quite high and the sex ratio was not especially low. Congestion was exacerbated in this area because there were more marriage opportunities and, it has been suggested by Devine, that the estate managers in these areas did not control subdivision with the same ruthlessness as did, for example, the duke of Argyll in Tiree. This meant that new households could be set up by young families on the crofts of their parents.²⁴³ These were the factors behind the rise of congestion and the proliferation of cottars and squatters on that island.

²⁴² T.M. Devine, *The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1988), 57–82.

²⁴³ Devine, *Great Highland Famine*, 288–94.

In the aftermath of the famine as a more critical perspective on the highland question began to develop in public discussion in Scotland and beyond the depopulation of the region became a subject of lamentation. There was also a strategic worry about the highlands. As we have seen, one justification for relatively high population levels in the eighteenth century was to preserve the highlands as a reservoir of soldiery. By the middle of the nineteenth century this was no longer a usable strategy. Recruitment for the Crimean War had been a disaster in the highlands. This was a concern at a national level. Not without some sentiment *The Times* commented in 1855: ‘if we want men for our armies ... we must go to Manchester or Birmingham, to the streets of the metropolis ... but not to the highlands of Scotland.’²⁴⁴ By the late nineteenth and twentieth century repopulation was the aim. In the contemporary period this has become almost an end in itself. The movement of people to the highlands and the increase in population in some parts of the region have been viewed, sometimes very uncritically, as straightforward evidence of economic revival. The theme of emigration will be explored in a later chapter, the concern here is with the trajectory of population levels in the highlands and the way in which they have become a proxy for the success or failure of different private and public policies in the region. Historians have sometimes become puzzled by the relationship between clearance, emigration and population levels. The relatively small group of writers who seek to downplay the importance of clearance point to the fact that in the early phase of the process population levels continued to increase and use this as evidence that the evictions were less problematic than their critics alleged. This represents a fatal misunderstanding of the early phase of clearance, the objective of which was to retain, rather than export, people. The relationship between clearance, emigration

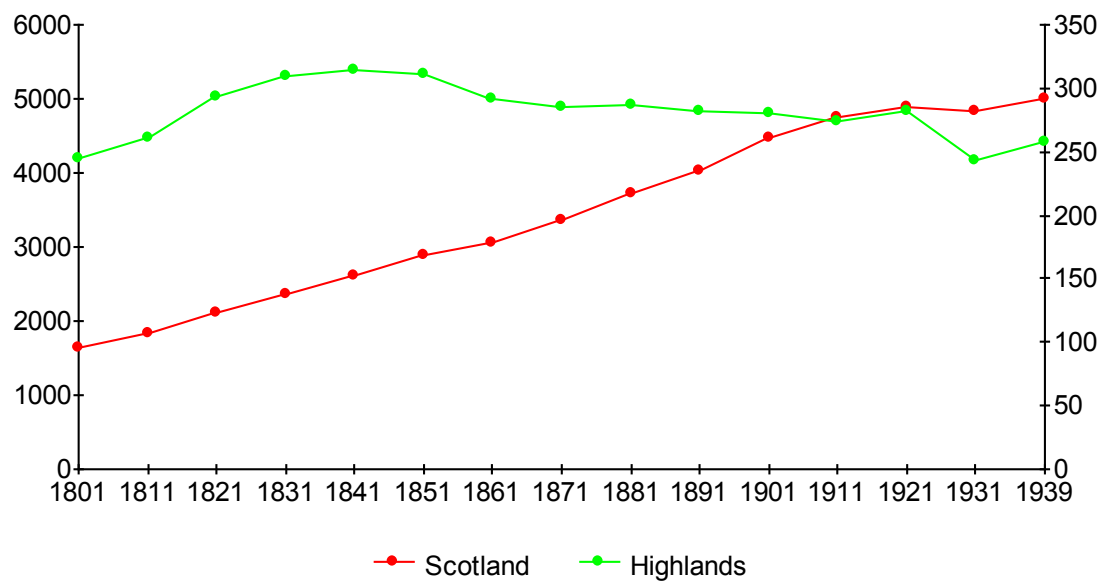
²⁴⁴ *The Times*, 21 Sep. 1855.

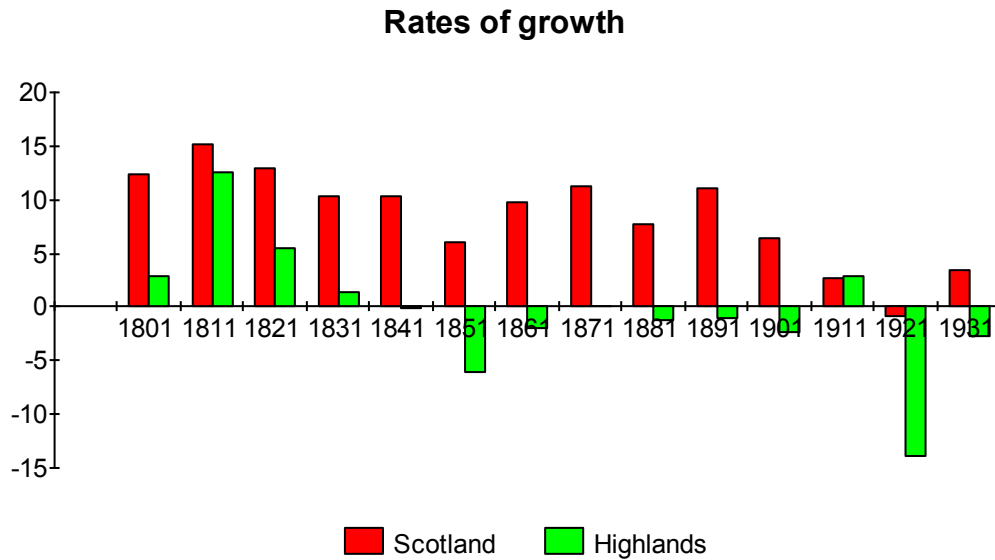
and demography is seen more clearly in the second phase of clearance, especially those which were conducted during the famine years. Most highland counties saw their population peak in the middle of the century and fall thereafter. In many cases, however, the pattern was so localised as to defy general description at county level.

Given the experience of the famine of the middle of the century it is easy to assume that the highlands were a distinct region of Scotland in demographic terms. There is some evidence for this. In the nineteenth century Scotland's population continued to grow despite the vast emigration which occurred over that period. Although highland emigration was a significant factor in demographic change in the region it was only a very small proportion of the outflow from Scotland. Most Scottish emigrants were skilled industrial workers from urban areas of the lowlands. Nevertheless, if we compare the highlands (excluding Caithness, Orkney and Shetland) with Scotland as a whole we see a marked divergence, as the following table indicates. The principal trends are evident from the two figures which follow the table.

Census	Total population (000s)		Rate of growth (per centage)	
	Scotland	Highlands	Scotland	Highlands
1801	1625	245		
1811	1824	261	12.3	2.9
1821	2100	294	15.1	12.6
1831	2374	310	13.0	5.4
1841	2620	314	10.4	1.3
1851	2889	311	10.3	-0.1
1861	3062	292	6.0	-6.1
1871	3360	285	9.7	-1.9
1881	3736	286	11.2	0.1
1891	4026	282	7.8	-1.2
1901	4472	280	11.1	-1.0
1911	4761	274	6.5	-2.3
1921	4882	282	2.6	2.8
1931	4843	243	-0.8	-13.8
1939	5007	257	3.4	-2.7

Scottish and Highland Pop. Changes





This clearly indicates a major shift in Scottish population history over the course of the nineteenth century. Population growth in the highlands had slowed markedly prior to the famine and from 1841 diverged from the general Scottish pattern of growth: this remained the case for most of the period down to the early 1970s when Scottish population peaked and entered a period of subsequent decline. The following graph shows this divergence quite clearly. What should also be noted however is the extent to which Scottish population growth was proceeding at a much slower rate than England and Wales. This was driven by two features: a much higher rate of emigration and a much lower rate of marriage in Scotland compared to England and Wales. In a period of high emigration across the UK, such as the 1880s, the net rate of emigration from Scotland was 5.8/1000 compared to 2.3/1000 from England. Although fertility within marriage was higher in Scotland than in England and Wales the rate of marriage in the population as a whole was much lower and, since most fertility took place within marriage, this produced a lower rate of overall population growth in the Scottish case. This, rather than emigration, seems a more likely explanation for the divergence of the

highland demographic regime from that of Scotland as a whole. The levels of population loss through migration from the highlands, although extensive, were not especially high by the standards of other areas of rural Scotland in the second half of the nineteenth century. In every decade between 1861 and 1939, with the exception of the 1920s, net migration from the Borders was greater than that from the highlands. Emigration alone cannot explain the loss of population from the highlands in the period between the famine and the 1920s. This is not to say, of course, that emigration was not highly significant in a sense wider and deeper than the mere statistics and a separate chapter will be devoted to it.

The pattern of marriage and related questions of fertility in the highlands deserve a little more examination. In the second half of the nineteenth century the number of women in the age group 45 to 54 who had never been married hovered consistently around 20 per cent.²⁴⁵ If we look at the highlands as a whole they appear as an extreme version of this wider Scottish pattern. The pioneering work of Flinn and his colleagues, distinguishing the highlands and the 'Far North', Caithness, Orkney and Shetland, note the extent to which patterns of marriage had a profound effect on the overall population levels in the region. Their data suggested that marriage was relatively late and that there was an even higher proportion than in Scotland as a whole of women who never married. This

²⁴⁵ Michael Anderson and Donald J. Morse, 'High fertility, high emigration, low nuptiality: adjustment processes in Scotland's demographic experience, 1861–1914, Part I', *Population Studies*, 47 (1993), 5–25; this work draws on the methodology employed by the extensive investigation into European fertility undertaken at Princeton University. In this project complex indices of population were constructed which compared fertility in a range of European societies to that of a constant provided by the birth rate of the Hutterites, a religious sect in western USA and Canada whose women had the highest rates of fertility ever recorded by demographers. This allowed detailed and consistent comparisons across a wide range of societies to be undertaken. Details of the Princeton project can be found at: [Http://opr.princeton.edu/Archive/pefp/](http://opr.princeton.edu/Archive/pefp/)

represented a strong check on fertility and compromised population growth in the crofting counties. The problem was not with fertility within marriage. Indeed, crofters and crofter-fisherman, especially those who married in their early twenties, had some of the highest rates of fertility in the country and the lowest propensity to have smaller families.²⁴⁶ The contribution of marriage to the decline of highland population is deepened by evidence which suggests that the average age at first marriage for women was higher in this region than in Scotland as a whole. The range in the Far North was 26.9 years to 28.4 years over the period 1861 to 1931. In the Highlands the figures were 26.5 to 28.6 and in Scotland as a whole they were 25.6 to 26.7. This represented further fertility which was foregone and helps to explain why the population of the crofting counties fell from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards.²⁴⁷ This picture is confirmed by the Princeton methodology and its construction of an index of 'nuptiality' which attempts to measure the effect of different marriage rates on fertility. This also demonstrates that Scotland's fertility was compromised by late and relatively infrequent marriage and that the highlands were even more marked in that respect.²⁴⁸ Indeed, the maps of the demographic patterns in Europe from the Urals to the west coast of Ireland demonstrate that in the late nineteenth century the Scottish highlands, especially the

²⁴⁶ Michael Anderson, 'Highly restricted fertility: very small families in the British fertility decline', *Population Studies*, 52 (1998), 182, 187–8; see also Michael Anderson, 'Fertility decline in Scotland, England and Wales, and Ireland: comparisons from the 1911 Census of Fertility', *Population Studies*, 52 (1998), 1–20 which suggests that those who married later, and crofters tended to do so, tended to have particularly small families.

²⁴⁷ Michael Flinn (ed.), *Scottish Population History from the 17th Century to the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1977), 324–34.

²⁴⁸ This index is constructed by dividing the number of children that married women aged 15 to 49 in a given population would have if they achieved Hutterite levels of fertility by the number of children all women in the same age group in the population would have if they achieved similar levels of fertility. This can be used to compare the effect of different marriage patterns on different populations, ie in the Highlands, Scotland or other European countries. Ansley J. Coale and Susan Cotts Watkins (eds), *The Decline of Fertility in Europe: The Revised Proceedings of a Conference on the Princeton European Fertility Project* (Princeton, 1986), 1–181.

county of Sutherland had levels of nuptiality as low as anywhere on the continent with the exception of one Swiss province.²⁴⁹ Work which has been undertaken looking at this measure at parish rather than county level demonstrates clearly that while there were local variations in the highlands and within counties, even within islands, the overall trend in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was downwards even within the relatively low levels exhibited in Scotland as a whole. It is the case, as Devine pointed out in suggesting that the famine period was not the 'climacteric' in demographic terms that many had assumed, that the picture in Lewis and Harris and some of the other outer Hebridean islands was slightly different. Moving towards the outbreak of the Great War, however, these areas exhibited higher but declining levels of nuptiality than most areas of the mainland. Even within the island of Lewis there were exceptions. The western parish of Uig began that decline at an earlier stage than the rest of the island. It had a level of 'nuptiality' below 0.333 as early as 1881. The neighbouring parish of Lochs, however, still had a high level, between 0.4 and 0.5, at this date. It was one of only a tiny handful of parishes to exhibit this level. An explanation for this contrast can be found in the different patterns of clearance. In the west the clearances were clearly associated with assisted emigration in the early 1850s. In Lochs, however, although most traditional townships were cleared the population was relocated by estate managers and remained within the parish. Lochs became the site of intense land agitation, especially over the existence of the extensive deer forest at Park, the site of the famous raid of November

²⁴⁹ Coale and Watkins, *Decline of Fertility*, map 2.6.

1887. By 1911 all four Lewis parishes had low levels of ‘nuptiality’ in common with most mainland parishes.²⁵⁰

This pattern of relatively high levels of fertility within marriage but low levels of ‘nuptiality’ has been noted in post-famine Ireland as well as the Scottish highlands. In both areas there have been some attempts to relate this to cultural and linguistic factors and to the ‘isolation’ of these regions. One older study suggested that

The population is ageing and at more than the average rate for Britain. Associated with this there appears to be declining vigour, accentuated, it may be, by the fact that the ancient indigenous culture has long been under insidious attack by western industrialism.²⁵¹

Such hypotheses are not especially convincing. In the highlands the extent of temporary migration counters the idea that the region was isolated or out of touch with practices in other parts of the country.

More convincing analyses are associated with the relationship between land tenure and resources and patterns of marriage. Some clues can be gained from very detailed studies of the island of Skye in the 1880s. It has been noted that the average age at first marriage for crofters on Skye was much higher than for those who made their principal income from fishing. This suggests that crofters were delaying marriage until they had access to

²⁵⁰ Anderson and Morse, ‘High fertility, part I’, 21–5; Anderson and Morse, ‘High fertility, part II’, 323–1; Devine, *Great Highland Famine*, 68–81.

²⁵¹ A.T.A. Learmonth, ‘The population of Skye’, *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 66 (1950), 99.

land through the death of their parents and their succession to the croft. Indeed, the fact that 81 per cent of the male crofters who married on Skye in the 1880s had lost their fathers prior to the wedding, provides evidence that this was the case.²⁵² Access to land was, therefore crucial in creating the conditions for marriage to be undertaken and a family unit constitute. This may well have been even more marked in the aftermath of the passage of the Crofters Act of 1886 when tenure became secure. It is also significant, however, that in contrast to depopulating counties in south west Scotland, the crofting counties provided opportunities, through day labouring, the fishing industry and temporary migration, for single men to survive and to remain in the county of their birth even if the higher level of economic security required for marriage was difficult to achieve.²⁵³ These single men formed the basis of the cottar and squatter community. These were the landless, who existed informally on the crofts of their parents or even more precariously in dwellings on the common grazing land. There were differences in the way in which estates sought to manage this group of people. The practice of subdivision was controlled quite tightly on Skye, in contrast to Lewis where it was endemic and led to severe congestion and rising levels of population until the early twentieth century. As a result the population of Skye fell in dramatic fashion from 1851 to 1951, from 19293 to 7243. As can be seen from the figure below the contrasts between the demographic histories of these two islands is very marked. There are a range of factors involved here but at least some of this contrast can be explained by the differing attitudes of landowners, demonstrating the extent to which this class still exerted a

²⁵² Ros Davies and Eilidh Garrett, 'More Irish than the Irish? Nuptiality and fertility patterns on the Isle of Skye, 1881–1891', in R.J. Morris and Liam Kennedy (eds), *Ireland and Scotland: Order and Disorder, 1600–2000* (Edinburgh, 2005), 85–98.

²⁵³ Michael Anderson, 'Why was Scottish nuptiality so depressed for so long?', in Isabelle Devos and Liam Kennedy (eds), *Marriage and Economy: Western Europe since 1400* (Turnhout, 1999), 64–9.

powerful influence on the day to lives of the communities and families on their estates. The relationship between the history of land tenure and demographic change is further evidenced by consideration of the way the Crofters Act had a very minimal effect on the demographic history of the highlands. Contrary to the idea that ‘access to crofting lands was secured following the Crofters’ Holdings Act of 1886’ this legislation did not provide ‘access’ to land which had formerly been closed off to crofters whose holdings were too small, far less to the cottars and squatters who were landless.²⁵⁴ Although it has been argued that ‘it might have been expected to provide a framework for retaining a contented population in the highlands’ because it did not challenge the existing structure of landholding its demographic potential was very limited and it is not especially surprising that population continued to fall in its aftermath.²⁵⁵ Indeed, it is worth recalling that Gladstone had specifically eschewed a demographic or economic justification for crofters legislation arguing that he did favour restoring crofters’ rights ‘because there are too many of them’.²⁵⁶

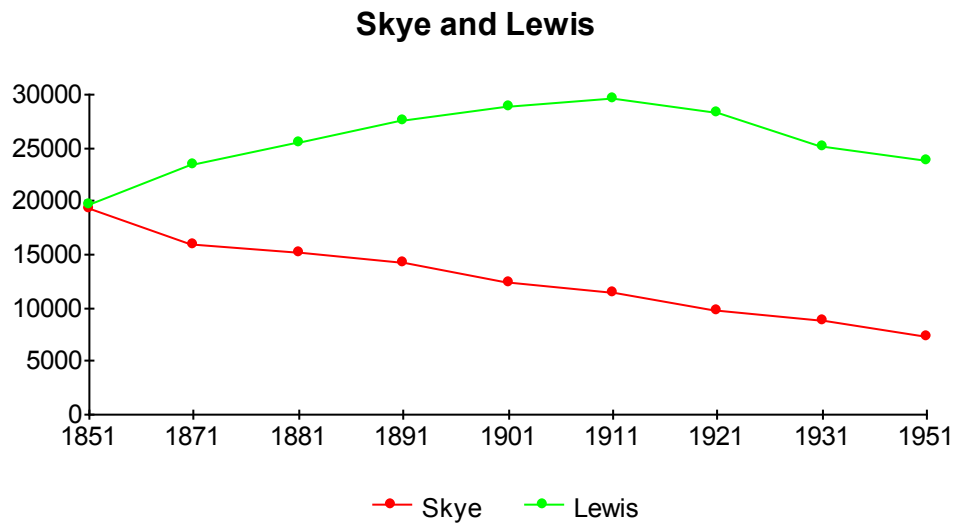
The case of Skye is interesting because the island was markedly influenced by the creation of new crofts through the land settlement process in the years after 1911. The principal landowners on the island, Lord Macdonald and MacLeod of Dunvegan, sold large acreages to the government after the Great War and the Board of Agriculture for Scotland established nearly 350 new crofts and enlarged another 160. Included in this programme of resettlement was the migration of crofters from Harris to a new crofting community at Portnalong on the west coast of the island. Even this level of investment,

²⁵⁴ Anderson, ‘Scottish nuptiality’, 67.

²⁵⁵ T. C. Smout, *A Century of the Scottish People, 1830–1950* (London, 1986), 76–7.

²⁵⁶ Gladstone to Harcourt, 19 Jan. 1885.

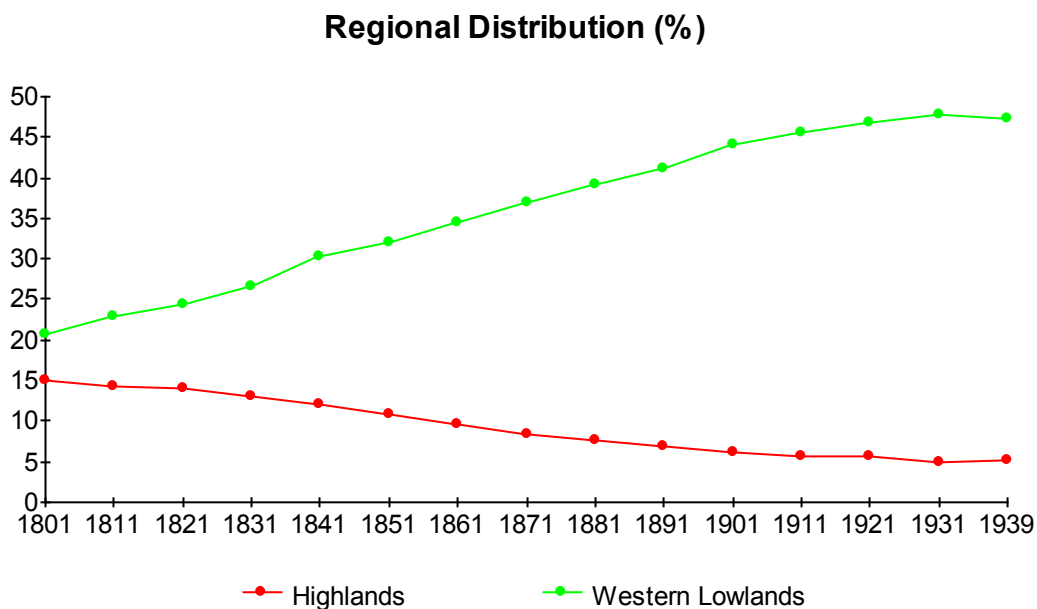
however, was not sufficient to make a dent in the demographic decline of the island. That things might have been much worse can be seen from the experience of the island of Mull. This island had experienced the full force of the most negative features of highland history: famine, clearance, emigration and, on the Argyll estates in the Ross of Mull and Iona, rack renting. In distinction to Skye or most other Hebridean islands, there was no compensation, however ineffective it may have been, in the form of government-sponsored land settlement.



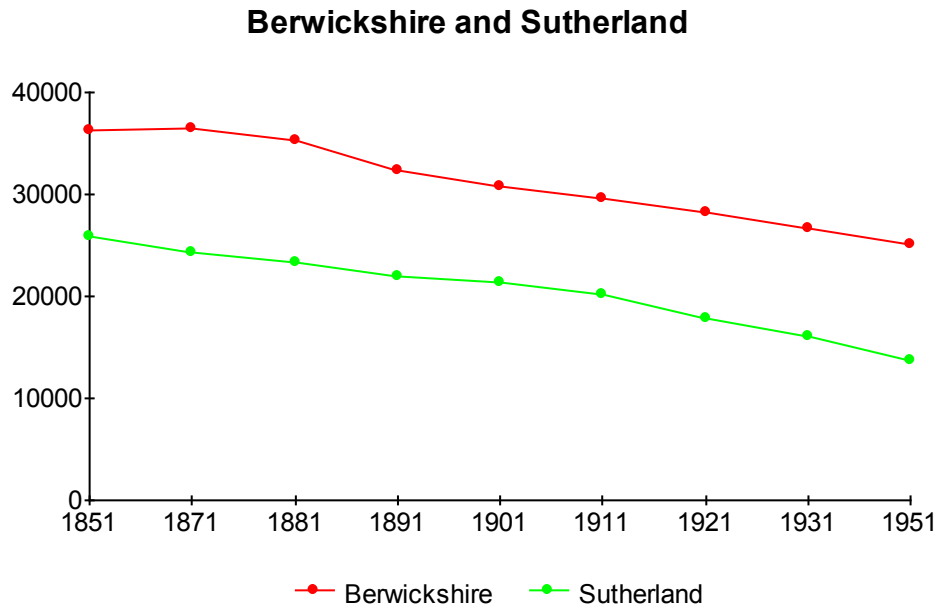
Temporary migration was also a key theme in the demographic history of the highlands. This was a key strategy in economic survival and was testimony to the extent to which the crofting population sought to retain a hold on the land. The most common patterns were of movements of crofters to the industrial and agricultural economy of lowland Scotland, as well as to the fishing industry of east coast. This strategy brought cash into the region and reduced the pressure of population on the land for extended portions of the year. Large number of young males were absent for months at an end and were not

draining the food supplies of their families. As the absence often covered the summer months, the point at which the census was recorded, this may help to explain the apparent relative lack of young men in the highlands. Temporary migration was, in the short term at least, an alternative to emigration; indeed, it was a strategy designed to prevent the necessity of a permanent move to the lowlands or abroad. In the longer term, however, it may have given migrants an awareness of wider locations, access to greater information about emigration and contact with a wider selection of potential emigrants.

If one considers the regional distribution of the Scottish population at the beginning of the nineteenth century the highlands contained only a slightly smaller proportion of the Scottish population than the western lowlands. A combination of rapid urbanization and industrialization saw the population of the latter region increase rapidly, in both an absolute and relative sense while that of the highlands contracted in both senses.



As we have seen, however, the matter was complicated by the diversity evident within the highlands. A further point can be made and that is the extent to which the pattern of stagnation and decline in the highlands was matched by other rural counties in Scotland. The counties of Sutherland and Berwickshire are not obvious comparators. Berwickshire was the site of the most advanced agriculture in Scotland, perhaps in the whole of the United Kingdom. Although improvement had reached its peak in this archetypal lowland county it had come at a demographic price not so different from that of the more northerly rural areas, as can be seen from the following graph. The graph is also an example of the way in which concentrating on the headline trend of population decline can disguise significant differences in the nature of that process. In the case of these two counties the difference lay in the effect of migration on population decline. Berwick lost a much higher proportion of its population through migration, whereas in Sutherland, although migration was not insignificant it was the lower level of fertility in Sutherland which produced population decline in the early part of this period. In the later part of the period, especially after the Great War, loss through migration took over as the principal element in depopulation in Sutherland.



This had been a matter for comment. William Cobbett remarked in 1832 that the efficiency of the agriculture was to be admired but the absence of people was notable and disagreeable: ‘All the elements seem to have been pressed into the amiable service of sweeping the people from the face of the earth.’²⁵⁷ Thus, the highlands had no monopoly of demographic decline in Scotland. There were, however, crucial differences in the way in which rural depopulation operated and were remembered which does mean that the two cases are different. While not denying the trauma of eviction, those swept from the land in the lowlands were absorbed more readily into the burgeoning industrial economy which was closer at hand compared to the highlands. Further the memory of eviction in the lowlands did not become politicized in the way it did in the highlands from the 1840s onwards. Indeed, the ‘lowland clearances’ faded from memory only to be rescued by historians in the late twentieth century and the depopulation of rural areas of lowland

²⁵⁷ D. Green (ed.), *Cobbett’s Tour in Scotland in the Autumn of the Year 1832* (Aberdeen, 1984), page?

Scotland did not become a particular social and political concern, as was the case in the highlands, as the twentieth century progressed.

In the period from 1945 to the 1980s there was widespread concern about the extent and persistence of depopulation in the highlands. There was a debate within government about the extent to which the difficulties being faced in the highlands were demographic or more fundamentally economic. Scottish Office departments repeatedly emphasised the former. In 1944 the Scottish Home Department, trying to argue for the inclusion of the highlands in the list of Development Areas to which industry might be redistributed, argued in emotional terms that was

impossible to contemplate with equanimity the progressive depopulation of some 50% of the entire area of Scotland and the social and other consequences of the virtual extinction in the British Isles of an eminently vigorous racial stock, every effort will require to be made to provide an economic means of livelihood for the local inhabitants of the Highland areas.²⁵⁸

The Board of Trade in London, the department responsible for this area of Policy was not impressed by this line of argument, preferred to identify smaller areas to focus on and was sceptical of Edinburgh's line of argument:

²⁵⁸ TNA, BT106/45/11, Legislation on balanced distribution of industry, Application to selected areas in the highlands (Note by the Scottish Home Dept)

While I think there is a problem of depopulation in the highland areas, I do not share the Scottish Office (naïve) view that any difference will be made to this by sweeping a wand over the whole of the highlands and calling it a development area. Most of the concrete measures needed to avoid depopulation are not industrial measures, but affect agriculture, housing, social amenities, fishing, shooting and the rest.²⁵⁹

In the event small areas at both ends of the Great Glen were scheduled as Development Areas but they were not conspicuous successes and had little demographic effect.

This debate between Scotland and Whitehall was characteristic of the consideration given in the early post-war period to the best way of targeting highland development. Was it best to focus on the areas which had suffered the greatest degree of depopulation, or, on the other hand, concentrate attention on the areas which seemed to have the greatest potential for growth. An investigation was carried out and areas were categorised according the 1951 population expressed as a percentage of the population figure in 1911. This method is interesting and serves to highlight the extent of depopulation which had occurred in some areas that forty year period. It also showed the diversity of conditions in areas quite close to each other. The western parish of Lochalsh, for example, was hardly depopulated at all over the period from 1911 to 1951. This was mostly due to the expansion of the village of Kyle of Lochalsh which was an important port and the terminus of the Highland Railway from Inverness. As Ross-shire County Council pointed out in the late 1940s:

²⁵⁹ TNA, BT177/192/5, H.S. Phillips to J.L. Reading, 14 Jun. 1948.

Kyle is very different from most Highland villages. It is young, growing and vigorous. It is a threshold over which a very constant stream of passengers, goods and vehicles pass on the way between Skye, the Outer Isles and the world of the east and south.

Points demographic vitality such as this, however, were not immune from the effects of the wider process and it was recognised that

Unless depopulation is arrested in the areas which Kyle serves – Skye, Lewis and Lochalsh – Kyle itself is bound to feel the pinch and its service industries to contract.²⁶⁰

The village had grown markedly since 1911, indicating that the rural areas of the parish were losing people. Other surveys produced at this time under the Town and country Planning Act of 1947 indicated that areas as diverse as Dundonell, Plockton, Lochcarron in Wester Ross and South Lochs in Lewis were afflicted with the shortage of young people, through a low birth rate and selective migration, and a relatively large proportion of the older generation. This was clearly evident in Lochcarron.

Although there is a marked majority of adult women (about three to every two men) many of whom are elderly spinsters of the generation that emigrated, lack of

²⁶⁰ NRS, DD12/971, Town and Country Planning Act, Ross and Cromarty Council Survey Report on Kyle of Lochalsh

work nowadays is resulting in the young women, rather than the young men leaving home. A population denuded of its potential mothers has a poor chance of survival.²⁶¹

This was the problem which exercised the government. The figures are shown below.

Assynt	42	Skye	65
Jura	46	Morvern	66
Tongue	51	Islay	68
Applecross	51	Farr, Rogart, Clyne and Kildonan	72
Durness	52	Kintail	72
Lochbroom	52	Lochcarron	74
Ardnamurchan	61	Creich	75
Ardgour	63	Glenshiel	91
Arisaig	and		
Moidart	64	Glenelg	95
Eddrachillis	64	Lairg	97
Mull	65	Lochalsh	99

As is evident from this table, Sutherland was identified as the area with some of the most pressing problems of depopulation, with Assynt having lost over half its population in the period since 1911. This was a pressing concern for the County Council and they commissioned the prominent planner Frank Mears to prepare a report on planning problems. Early in the post war period they lobbied the Scottish Office to have created a

²⁶¹ NRS, DD12/971, Town and Country Planning Act ... Lochcarron, Oct. 1952,

‘Special Authority for the Northern Highland Counties’.²⁶² Sutherland was an unusual county in that it was particularly deficient in areas of agricultural potential, it had no large towns to offset rural depopulation (Dornoch was the largest settlement with only 800 inhabitants), had few areas with potential for industrial development and did not figure largely in the plans for the development of hydro-electricity.²⁶³ The County Council argued that the parish of Assynt was ‘approaching the stage of social and economic collapse’. Drawing on the ideas of Mears’ father in law, Patrick Geddes, the Council argued that a ‘comprehensive regional policy was required. They sought a focus on small industry alongside a revival of forestry and small-scale agriculture through a modernised crofting system which would pay more attention to the interest of those who sought a croft than the legal rights of absentees.’²⁶⁴ In Sutherland, of course, the shadow of the clearances was particularly dark. This fact led to the refusal of Mears to contemplate the idea of writing off areas as unviable or even going very far along the road of grouping smaller crofts into larger units. Not only was he sceptical of the idea that bigger was always best but he argued that such an approach was ‘but a survival of that put forward by men who sought to justify the clearances’.²⁶⁵ That very little came of this activity can be seen that twenty years later the County Council commissioned another planning report on the development of Sutherland. This document began with an emphatic statement of

²⁶² NRS, DD12/973/1, Meeting, at Lairg, between the Advisory Panel for the Highlands and Sutherland County Council, 21 Feb. 1952.

²⁶³ For a detailed description of the problems facing the county and the difficulty in providing services in such a depopulated area see P.M. Hobson, ‘Congestion and depopulation: a study in rural contrasts between West Lewis and West Sutherland’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, 1952, 142–4, 155–7, 191.

²⁶⁴ NRS, DD12/973/2, The County Council of Sutherland. A Report on the Problems of Redevelopment and Planning in the County. Prepared by Sir Frank Mears. June 1952.

²⁶⁵ NRS, DD12/973/2, Sutherland, Report on the Problems of Redevelopment

the continuing demographic problems arising from the ‘diminishing numbers of younger people in the composition of its communities’.²⁶⁶

It is striking that none of the Lewis parishes were included in this table and this suggests that although this island’s demography shifted into line, to an extent, with the rest of the highlands after 1911, there were still hangovers from its distinctive nineteenth-century pattern. There were also, as has been noted above in the discussion of fertility, distinctions between the Lewis parishes. As in Sutherland, the clearances remained a strong influence on thinking about this topic after the Second World War. The relationship between the memory of the clearances and post-war thinking about population was entirely different in the two cases, however. Until recently there was a historiographical consensus that the island had not been much affected by the clearances. There was a hint of this in Ross-shire County Council’s 1947 Report on the western portion of Lewis.

This part of Uig was the only area in Lewis to be affected by clearances for sheep farms, and in consequence its history recently has differed in several ways from the island’s as a whole. This immunity from eviction and the great increase of population in Lewis was unique in the Highland area, and its consequences are still unique.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ Jack Holmes Planning Group, *County of Sutherland Development Plan* (Glasgow, 1973), no page numbers.

²⁶⁷ NRS, DD12/972, Survey Report on West Uig, Lewis, 1955.

The parish of Uig had a quite different population trajectory from the rest of Lewis. While it is probably correct to say that Uig was the area most affected by clearance leading to emigration in the 1850s it was certainly not the only area of the islands affected by evictions leading to the creation of sheep farms. The experience of South Lochs is instructive in this regard. The County Council's Survey Report, contemporaneous to that on Uig, made no mention of the fact that traditional townships had been destroyed to make way for a large sheep farm, later a deer forest, at Pairc.²⁶⁸ These clearances did not lead to depopulation in that the evicted were not coerced into the emigrant ship, as they were in Lewis, but new crofting communities were set up in the same parish meaning that the clearances do not show up if depopulation is the only piece of evidence sought. Certainly Uig was the Lewis parish with the slowest rate of growth, its 1951 population was 130 per cent of the figure for 1801. The next slowest growing parish was, interestingly, Lochs where the comparable figure was 166 per cent. The other two parishes, Barvas and Stornoway, had figures of 229 per cent and 430 percent, the latter inflated by the growth of the town. The figure for the whole island was 259 per cent.

The data is interesting but the language of the document is fascinating in the context of highland history over the period since the clearances. There was a recognition that countering depopulation was not merely 'sentimental' but involved a 'waste of social capital already sunk in these areas in the form of roads, houses and other services including in some cases expenditure recently incurred by the Hydro Electric Board in

²⁶⁸ NRS, DD12/972, Survey Report on South Lochs, Lewis, 1955.

electricity distribution schemes.’²⁶⁹ The activity which the government focused on as giving the best chance of reviving the population of rural communities in the highlands through increasing employment was forestry. The idea of countering depopulation with economic stimulation had a long history in the highlands, going back at least to Telford’s ideas in the early nineteenth century.

A series of government policies were designed to try to counter the drift of population from the north. These mostly included the attempts to develop the economy of the highlands and, in the 1960s especially, there was great confidence that ‘the introduction of non-indigenous sources of employment’ could reverse depopulation as well as deal with unemployment.²⁷⁰ The principal example of the apparent success of such a policy was the introduction of the atomic energy facilities at Dounreay in Caithness. The employment generated there saw a marked increase in the population of the county in the 1950s. Even here, however, the effect was geographically concentrated in the Thurso area and quite short lived. In demographic terms the international comparisons served to highlight the depth of the problem in the highlands. Rather like the nineteenth century there were parallels with the Irish population in that natural increase, around 9/1000 in Ireland in this decade was wiped out by net migration, -13.2/1000 in the Irish case compared to -7.9/1000 across the crofting region as a whole in the same decade. If Ireland proved to be an extreme example of a similar model something very different was to be found in Norway and Sweden where levels of natural increase were quite healthy at 10/1000 and 5.3/1000, respectively, but the growth of the population was not

²⁶⁹ NRS, SEP12/125, Highland Development, Selection of Areas for Development, 1952.

²⁷⁰ NRS, SEP12/166, Scottish Development Group, Study of the Highlands and Islands: Population, Jan. 1964.

compromised by losses through net migration. Sweden's population grew by nearly 7 per cent and Norway's by around 10 per cent in the 1950s and this growth was evident across the country, in both rural and urban areas. This compared to Scotland's rate of growth at 1.2/1000 and a loss of 5.5/1000 in the crofting counties.²⁷¹ Indeed, in Scottish government thinking about the highlands in the late 1950s and 1960s there developed something of an obsession about Norway and the ways in which it seemed to have conquered the problem of rural depopulation. There is evidence that part of the reason identified for this contrast was a very negative view of the highlander by some elements of Scottish officialdom. In commenting on a visit to Scotland of the Norwegian Parliamentary Transport Committee in 1960 a civil servant noted that 'the problem of communities shrinking below the point of viability did not arise'. He went to assert that the delegation 'did not mention that the Norwegians may well be more persistent workers than the West Highlanders'.²⁷² The possibility that such a thought was alien to them seemed not to occur to him. In 1963 Lord Cameron, Chairman of the Advisory Panel on the Highlands, suggested that vacant crofts ought to be offered to 'energetic young, keen-to-farm Norwegians'. In evidence that this negative view was deprecated by some leading officials, this idea, with its implication that the native highlanders were not energetic or keen to farm, was anathema to Robert Urquhart, the Chairman of the Crofters Commission. He was exasperated that the Commission 'might have spared itself the pains of trying to persuade Edinburgh and the Lowlands that Highlanders are normal

²⁷¹ NRS, SEP12/219 (also at SEP12/100), Recent Population Changes in the Highlands and Islands (Department of Health for Scotland), Jun. 1959.

²⁷² NRS, SEP12/1, Note on the visit to the Highlands of the Norwegian Parliamentary Transport Committee in September 1960,

people.’ For Urquhart the problem was not the people of the region but the way that their history had developed:

It is certainly true that in the highlands as a whole, and particularly the remoter islands, communities have run down sometimes to the point of death; but the explanation is not in their unworthiness or incapacity but in the fact that the blood stream of the body social and economic is thin and the circulation bad. It would only be a matter of a very short time under a British parliament and Scottish administration before the heartiest of Norwegians began to wilt in the outer isles of Orkney, for exactly those same reasons that have caused the natives to lose heart and move out.²⁷³

By the early 1960s the problem of highland depopulation, beyond the small areas, such as Caithness, affected by big projects or what officials called ‘the central axis’ of the region running from Fort William up through the Great Glen to Inverness and on to Easter Ross. This demographic feature of the condition of the highlands also appeared anomalous by this period. By this time there was evidence that government was beginning to be influenced by awareness of the rise in the birth rate. Former assumptions about a largely static and ageing population were being revised. The figures produced for the rising birth rate showed that it was particularly evident in Scotland, although not in the highlands. In the north of Scotland the problems were a relatively low birth rate (although marital fertility remained high) and an age structure which was top heavy with older people. Enoch Powell and Michael Noble, Secretary of State for Scotland, raised this vast issue at

²⁷³ NRS, SEP12/218, Robert Urquhart to W. Russell (DAFS), 7 Jun. 1963.

Cabinet level and concluded that ‘we must change substantially our assumptions about the future of the country in ways which cannot but have implications for many of our policies, economic, social and political’.²⁷⁴ It has been argued that this was an important factor in turning the Conservative government towards policies which gave a greater role for the state.²⁷⁵ This change in outlook would have a significant effect in the highlands, as shall be shown in a later chapter.

The topic of depopulation was an emotive one through its association with the clearances of the nineteenth century. There were occasions in the 1940s and 1950s where thought was given to the abandonment and evacuation of areas of western Ross-shire and north-west Sutherland but this was avoided as defeatist and reminiscent of the clearances. The only example of managed evacuation was that of St Kilda in 1930. This could be presented as a special case because of the extreme geographical isolation of the islands. To adopt the same policy on the mainland or the hebridean islands was entirely different and was largely avoided. Nevertheless, by the early 1960s there was a growing sense in some parts of government that a ‘realistic’ approach to highland population was necessary. The Scottish Development Group, a policy coordinating body in the Scottish Economic Planning Department observed in 1964 at the outset of a study into the highland economy:

²⁷⁴ TNA, CAB29/112, Population Prospects, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Minister of Health, 14 Jan. 1963.

²⁷⁵ Glen O’Hara, “‘We are faced everywhere with a growing population’: demographic change and the British state, 1955–1964’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 15 (2004), 243–66.

There should be no preconception that the level of employment and population must necessarily be higher or even the same as at present; and it should be accepted that may have to be lower.²⁷⁶

While this view could be articulated within the confines of St Andrews House it would be have been more difficult for politicians to enunciate it in public. The Advisory Panel on the Highlands was discussing this problem around the same time. The Chairman of the Panel, a Skye landowner called Iain Hilleary (whose father had chaired an important commission on the highland economy in the 1930s) posed the question of

Whether public money should be spent on providing modern communal facilities such as water supplies etc for communities in decline and the question arose as to whether such facilities should be withheld, as in Norway, from areas which were thought to have no future. The sub-committee might wish to study places to which the population of dying communities might move and to consider means of inducing them to move to areas with possibilities of growth. But any hint of direction would be dangerous.²⁷⁷

Hilleary's final point was certainly not an exaggeration. The Congested Districts Board had several times suggested migration schemes of this kind but very few were implemented because of the problems of reception and the very specific nature of the

²⁷⁶ NRS, SEP12/117, Minutes of 1st Meeting, 30 Jan. 1964.

²⁷⁷ NRS, SEP12/198, APH, Sub Committee of Development and Transport Groups, Minutes of Meeting, 11 Dec. 1964.

land hunger of that period.²⁷⁸ The post-war migration from Harris to the Portnalong area in the west part of Skye is so well known because it was so unusual. The difficulties of the issue can be seen by the fact that some of the communities which were perceived to be ‘dying’ or ‘stagnant’, the language is interesting, were those which had been established by the schemes of land reform just before and just after the Great War. Vatersay was a case in point. This had been one of the most controversial disputes in the Edwardian era. There had been repeated land raids and, eventually, the government, through the Congested Districts Board purchased the islands and settled crofters on it. This was counter to the then Liberal government’s policy of creating new holdings on privately owned land.²⁷⁹ Partly because the land had been purchased with almost exclusive reference to its potential as grazing and croft land and very little thought had been given to establishment of services and community facilities. By the 1960s the problems were profound and the possibility of evacuation was discussed. There was no proper water supply to the dwellings until 1974, no regular vehicle ferry until 1975 and only a causeway to Barra, completed in 1991, had any lasting impact on restoring the population of the island which had dropped from 288 in 1911 to 65 in 1988.²⁸⁰

Contemporary demography

Matters relating to population were part of the general current of political discussion in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. They have not always been so in the period since then but they are beginning to emerge once again into the limelight of public

²⁷⁸ NRS, AF42/5068, Angus Sutherland to R.R. MacGregor, 10 Jun. 1908.

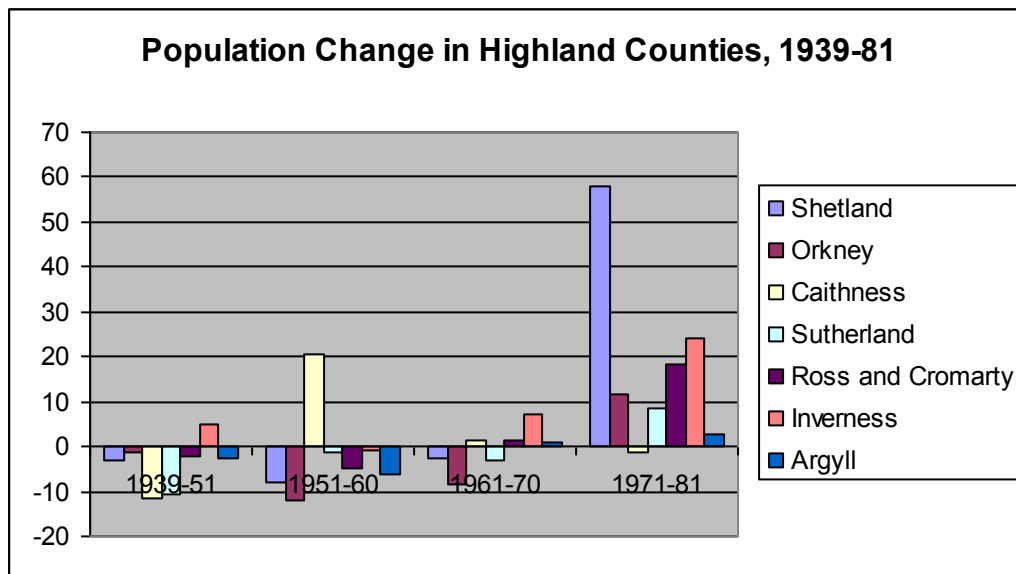
²⁷⁹ Cameron, *Land for the People?*, 109–19; Ben Buxton, *The Vatersay Raiders* (Edinburgh, 2008), 68–140.

²⁸⁰ NRS, SEP12/15/2, Report by J.M. Rollo on visit to Vatersay, 13 and 14 Jul. 1964; SEP12/194, Vatersay Estate, Notes by DAFS, 26 Oct. 1964; Buxton, *Vatersay Raiders*, 163–78.

debate. The current discussion about topics such as migration, patterns of consumption, climate change and food production has brought neo-Malthusian arguments, as well as counter arguments, to the fore. This has produced polarised views with some arguing that the likely rise of the world population towards the ten billion mark is likely to produce a fundamental crisis of a kind which Malthus could not have conceived. Others posit that while human population increase is inexorable that the ten billion mark need to be feared in an apocalyptic manner and that pragmatic technological and behavioural solutions to the problems posed by feeding and satiating the appetites for consumption of a much larger human population can be found.²⁸¹ In the face of such vast issues of a global scale the demographic history of a small, relatively sparsely-populated region in north-west Europe does not seem especially important. The significance of the Scottish highlands is that the region is an example of an area where concern about population levels has been more or less constant over the past two centuries. As we have seen there have been different kinds of concern, sometimes motivated by Malthusian worries about overpopulation, at other times stimulated by concern over population loss through emigration. In the twentieth century, however, the debate has been about population decline and the extent to which the area is 'viable' for provision of meaningful services and the sustaining of communities. In short, far from worrying about overpopulation the recent discussion of Scottish highland demography has been conducted in terms of seeing population increase as a positive virtue.

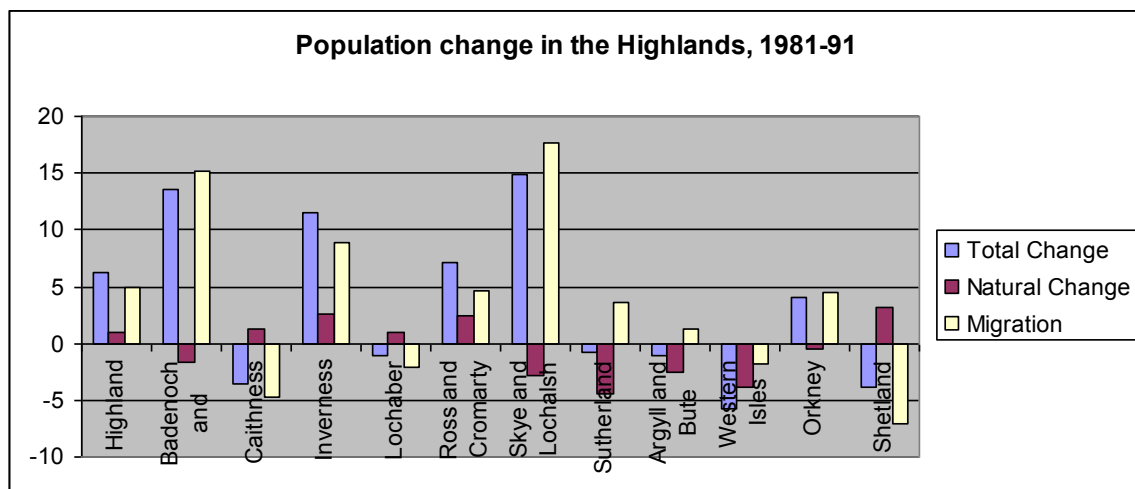
²⁸¹ Stephen Emmot, *Ten Billion* (London, 2013) argues that we are 'fucked' and has little faith in either technological or behavioural change; Danny Dorling, *Population 10 Billion: The Coming Demographic Crisis and How to Survive It* (London, 2013) is critical of neo-Malthusians and more optimistic.

If recent population figures in the north of Scotland are examined there is apparently clear evidence of a remarkable turnaround. This was first evident in the 1970s as the following figure shows.



The overwhelmingly negative picture which was evident in much of the post-war period changed markedly in the 1970s. Although there had been isolated pockets of growth associated with the expansion of the town of Inverness or linked to the in-migration of people to work at Dounreay in Caithness in the 1950s and 1960s, for example, the overall picture was one of population loss. The expansion of the oil industry in the 1970s provided a major boost to population growth in the highlands in the 1970s, especially in Shetland but also in the mainland highland counties where there were fabrication yards at Arderseir, east of Inverness; Nigg in Easter Ross; and the extraordinary facility at Kishorn in western Inverness-shire for the construction of vast concrete platforms. This brought employment and migration to the highlands in a way that had not been seen at

earlier points in the twentieth century. This has been presented as a positive feature of recent highland history. This has been evident in the views of historically aware commentators on the contemporary highlands and the public statements of economic development agencies.²⁸² This picture of population growth through in-migration can be seen if the 1980s is examined in a little more depth. This was a decade of continuing growth but the forces which drove this growth can be seen from the next figure which draws out the extent to which in-migration was such a vital part of the population turnaround.



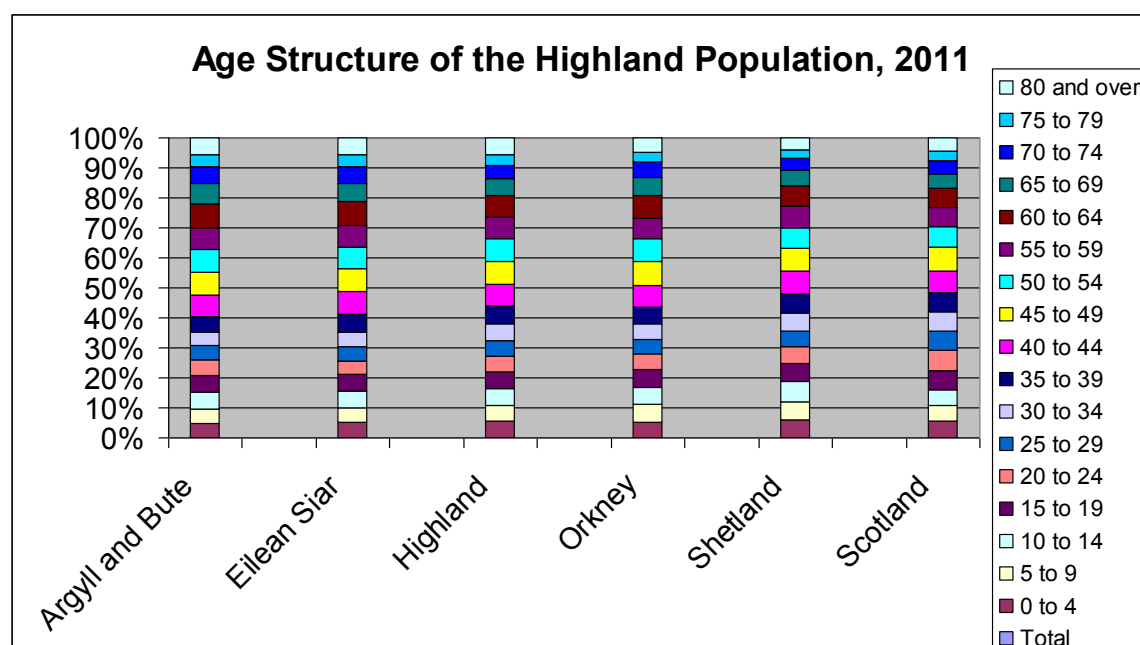
This theme is more difficult to follow through in the 1990s due to changes in local authority boundaries but a broadly similar picture emerges with growth at a lower level but migration being the key determinant of change in areas where there was population increase. In some areas sharp population decline continued. The Western Isles, for

²⁸² James Hunter, 'The Scottish highlands a contested country', in *Fonn 's Duthchas: Land and Legacy* (Edinburgh, 2007); see also a series of very useful documents published in 2011 by Highlands and Islands Enterprise entitled *HIE Area Profiles*, at <http://www.hie.co.uk/regional-information/economic-reports-and-research/archive/area-profiles.html>

example, continued to lose population at a rate sharper than any other local authority area in Scotland, experiencing a decline of 10 per cent in this decade.

Even in areas where there was, in a highland historical context, spectacular population growth, this was driven by in-migration rather than natural change. This was a major reversal of long-running historical forces which had been influencing people to leave the region since the population peaked in the middle of the nineteenth century. The most recent figures to emerge from the Census of 2011 can be analysed to try to make some conclusions about the distinctive period of highland population change which has been evident for the past forty years. There are, of course, new factors in the last decade which complicate the picture. The most notable of these is the substantial migration from countries, especially Poland, which joined the European Union in 2004. Before returning to the effect of this important development there are two points which can be made: the first concerns the age structure of the population and the second relates to the spatial distribution of population growth.

The overall impact of forty years of population change driven largely by successive phases of in-migration has produced a population which has an age structure skewed towards older age groups if highland areas are compared with Scotland as a whole, as the following figure shows.



In the Highland Council area the number of children under the age of 16 has fallen since 2001 and the percentage of retired people has also increased. The cohort aged between 55 and 64 has also increased markedly and with prolonged life-expectancy the number of retired people living in the Highlands is set to increase even further. This will present a particular challenge for local authorities in the delivery of services.²⁸³ This has been a long-running problem in the highlands but it now arises for different reasons than was the case in the middle of the twentieth century. In the age of depopulation the surfeit of older people arose from the out-migration of younger people. In the recent period of repopulation it has arisen from in-migration of older people. One exception to this pattern is the migration of people from Poland since 2004. Scotland is becoming more diverse in terms of the place of birth of its population. The census of 2011 recorded 93 per cent born outside the UK, compared to 96 per cent in 2001. Of the group born outside the UK the

²⁸³ Highland Council, *2011 Census – Population Change in Highland, 2001 to 2011*, 1 published at <http://www.highland.gov.uk>

greatest number, 55,000 come from Poland. This was a predominantly younger population, 69 per cent were of working age and 38 per cent were in their twenties; by comparison only about 13 per cent of the Scottish population and just over 10 per cent of the population in Highland Council area were in this age bracket.²⁸⁴ These young people have had a significant impact in many rural and semi-rural areas in the highlands where they have helped to address gaps in the labour market.²⁸⁵

The second general point which can be made concerns the spatial distribution of the population growth. Analysis by Highland Council of the quite strong population growth in the inter-censal period between 2001 and 2011 – 23,218 people represented a growth rate of 11.1 per cent - has shown that the strongest areas of growth are in the east highlands. Indeed, the expansion of the southern part of the city of Inverness by over 8,000 people accounts for one third of growth. This can be contrasted with North, West and Central Sutherland which grew by only 1.7 per cent, or the towns of Caithness, which experienced a population decline of over 4 per cent. This reflects planning decisions on the building of new homes as well as the relative strength of the economies in these areas.²⁸⁶

Highland demographic history shows considerable points of continuity amidst the apparent revolutionary reversal of long-term trends. The significance of the shift in migration patterns is very striking indeed. This is especially so when it is placed

²⁸⁴ These figures are taken from the September 2013 release of information from the 2011 Census of Scotland: see <http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/documents/censusresults/release2a/StatesBulletin2A.pdf>

²⁸⁵ Philomena de Lima and Sharon Wright, 'Welcoming migrants? Migrant labour in rural Scotland', *Social Policy and Society* 8 (2009), 391–404.

²⁸⁶ Highland Council, *2011 Census – Population Change in Highland, 2001 to 2011*, 2

alongside the long-term decline in population in Scotland's industrial areas, which had been at the centre of the strongest period of Scottish population growth in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The long-term decline in highland population since the middle of the nineteenth century makes this recent period of growth notable. Nevertheless, the continued problems with the age structure of the population, alongside the concentration of growth in the eastern highlands are familiar features. Although population decline in the Western Isles has slowed down in the current inter-censal decade compared to the 1980s or 1990s it remains a problem. The final point of continuity is the sustained interest in population levels and their status as a virtual proxy for the condition of the region. This mode of thinking would have been familiar to Thomas Telford in the early nineteenth century and it remains pertinent in the aftermath of the second census of the twenty-first century.

Chapter Four.

Emigration.

Emigration has been a central theme in the history of Scotland in the modern period. Indeed, at times historians have used the term ‘diaspora’ to describe the movement of people. The highlands play a central role in the view of Scottish emigration which asserts that those who left were victims of coercive forces. Paintings such as Thomas Faed’s *The Last of the Clans*, J.W. Nicol’s *Lochaber No More* and Horatio McCulloch’s *My Heart’s in the Highlands* contribute to this understanding, not least by their frequent appearance on books about highland history.²⁸⁷ These paintings, it has been suggested, were quite unusual in Victorian art in their direct reference to emigration. All three painters, it should be noted, were based in London.²⁸⁸ A different message was conveyed by painters who were more engaged politically and closer to the action. William McTaggart, a Gaelic speaker from Kintyre, returned again and again to theme of emigration in his work. His seascapes are devoid of the sentimentality of Faed or Nicol and his most famous painting, *The Sailing of the Emigrant Ship* from 1883. Although it portrays a sailing vessel from the middle of the nineteenth century the picture presents emigration as a current issue for the highlands, for all the abstraction of its portrayal of the moment of emigration. McTaggart’s connections to figures associated with the crofters’ movement gives his

²⁸⁷ Anne MacLeod, ‘The Highland landscape: visual depictions, 1760–1883’ in Dauvit Broun and Martin MacGregor (eds), *Mìorun Mòr nan Gall, ‘The Great Ill-Will of the Lowlander’? Lowland Perceptions of the Highlands, Medieval and Modern* (Glasgow, 2009), 151–2

²⁸⁸ Robin Nicholson, ‘Lochaber no more: landscape, emigration and the Scottish artist, 1849–1895’, *Nineteenth Century Art Worldwide*, 7 (2008) [ejournal: no pages].

work a political edge absent from others whose work fed a market for sentimental images.²⁸⁹

Gaelic poetry, stimulated by real events rather than the imagined world of these artists, also deals in depth with emigration. As late as 1878, when it might be argued that large scale clearance and emigration was a thing of the past, poets posited a link between clearance and emigration. John MacLean's song 'Manitoba' was composed in response to the emigration of a group of young men from Tiree in 1878.

'S e faileas na daoine: 's nach sgarach an saoghal –
'S e 's fasan dha daonnan bhith caochladh gach là.
'Nar coigrich air uachdar, cha mhaireann 's cha bhuan sinn
Is miltean de thruaghain gam fuadach thar sàil

Tha luchd fearainn shaoir anns an àm se ro-ghaolach
Air stòras an t-saoghail a shlaodadh bho chàch;
'S bidh innealan baoghalt, sa Ghaidhealtachd daonnan
Gu fogradh nan daoine, 's cur chaorach 'nan àit'.

(The people are mere shadows; how fickle the world is!/It is ever its nature to
change day by day;/We are strangers upon its face, we are fleeting and
transient,/With thousands of poor wretches being driven overseas./The free

²⁸⁹ James L Caw, *William McTaggart RSA VPRSW. A Biography and an Appreciation* (Glasgow, 1917), Caw was McTaggart's son-in-law; Lindsay Errington, *William McTaggart, 1835–1910* (Edinburgh, 1989); Douglas Hall, 'William McTaggart. Edinburgh', *Burlington Magazine*, 131 (1989), 732–3.

holders of land at this time are obsessed/ with dragging the world's riches away
from the rest;/and foolish devices will always be tried in the Highlands/to disperse
the people and put sheep in their place.)

This poem also conveys a sense of the finality of emigration, the men who left were gone, never to return. It also suggests a sense of a generation who had been betrayed by landlord and state after their heroic actions during the Crimean war. This notion that the highlander's military prowess ought to engender greater gratitude is a common one in this period.²⁹⁰

In popular culture the Scottish emigrant was a starving highlander who was forced from his land by a rapacious landowner. Thereby, not only are the highlands central to the myth of Scottish emigration but emigration is central to myths which have grown up around the traumatic process of clearance. Indeed, it is the fact that some victims of the clearances emigrated that adds pathos to the history of Scottish emigration and helps to ensure that both processes endure in the national memory. In the year 2000 a parliamentary motion was tabled by the MSP for Caithness and Sutherland that sought to apologise for the clearances and made the link with the emigration explicit. The motion expressed the Parliament's 'deepest regrets for the occurrence of the Highland clearances and extends its hand in friendship to the descendants of the cleared people who reside

²⁹⁰ Donald E. Meek (ed.), *Tuath is Tighearna: Tenants and Landlords. An Anthology of Gaelic Poetry of Social and Political Protest from the Clearances to the Land Agitation (1800–1890)*, (Edinburgh, 1996), 80–2, 205–6.

outwith our shores.’²⁹¹ Emigration is an important theme in the period covered by this book but to understand how it operated analysis of earlier periods is required.

*

The nineteenth century was the great age of emigration. As has been noted by a recent historian in this period ‘articulate opinion in Scotland regarded emigration from the homeland in positive terms’, it was a means by which important aspects of Scottishness could be spread around the world.²⁹² A combination of expansion of economic opportunity in the new world, better travel links and a remarkable flow of information back and fore across the Atlantic created a situation where people were stimulated to seek a new life in the west. The bald statistics are remarkable: between the end of the Napoleonic War in 1815 and the onset of the economic depression in 1929 which choked off the employment opportunities which drew people to foreign shores, around 45 million people left Europe for North America, Australia, New Zealand and other destinations.²⁹³ Scots played a disproportionate role in this movement. For a small country whose overall population only exceeded 4 million in the late nineteenth century it is striking to record that around 2 million Scots emigrated in this period. Scottish emigration is also notable in that this movement emanated from a society which was industrialising rapidly, unlike other major sources of emigrants like Ireland. The fact that people were drawn to Scotland adds to the puzzle and when one considers that the archetypal Scottish emigrant of this period was a skilled industrial worker it is not surprising that historians have

²⁹¹ *ORSP*, 27 Sept. 2000, col. 700.

²⁹² T.M. Devine, *To the Ends of the Earth: Scotland's Global Diaspora, 1750–2010* (London, 2011), 285.

²⁹³ Dudley Baines, ‘European emigration, 1815–1930: looking at the emigrant decision again’, *Economic History Review*, 47 (1994), 525–44.

referred to the 'paradox' of Scottish emigration.²⁹⁴ This important refashioning of our understanding of Scottish emigration might be used to suggest that highland emigration was marginal, both statistically and thematically, in the wider movement from Scotland but that would be problematic. Although it is important not to exaggerate the place of the highlander in the outflow from Scotland it is also important not to lose sight of the role played by emigration in the course of highland history over the course of the period under consideration here.

There are a number of reasons for returning to the theme of emigration in highland history. The first is the long tradition of emigration from the region, stretching from the period before the 1745 rebellion to the mass movements of the 1920s. Second, in contrast to the wider Scottish movement, highland emigration took place against a background of falling population in the region. Thirdly, again in contrast to the aggregate Scottish picture, there was, especially in the 1840s and 1850s, an unambiguous element of coercion in the highland case. Finally, for much of the period the British state not only identified the promotion of emigration as a theoretical solution to the problems of the region but acted to implement such policies on a number of occasions. The place of emigration in the political memory of thinking about the highlands can be seen from the way in which a Secretary of State for Scotland in 1965 referred to the matter in seeking to distance his policy of economic intervention and stimulation from earlier approaches: 'Too often there has been only one way out of his troubles for the person born in the

²⁹⁴ T. M. Devine, 'The paradox of Scottish emigration', in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Scottish Emigration and Scottish Society* (Edinburgh, 1992), 1–15.

highlands – emigration’.²⁹⁵ This chapter will review these themes in emigration from the highlands and then move on to consider the nature of highland émigré communities.

*

One reason for the strong image of the highlander as the archetypal Scottish emigrant is the long tradition of highland emigration and the fact that before 1815 highlanders probably predominated at certain key periods although they were in the minority overall. Although our statistics are patchy it has been suggested that around 25,000 highlanders left over the course of the period from 1700 to 1815. Given the transport difficulties and levels of information about emigrant destinations in this period this was a very significant movement in the context of emigration from Britain.²⁹⁶ The principal destination in this period was British North America. The migration parties of this period were often led by tacksmen and clergymen and by the later eighteenth century these movements were contrary to the wishes of landowners and government who wished to retain population for lucrative but labour-intensive activities such as kelping, fishing and military recruiting. This is in marked contrast to the emigration of the post-1815 period when landlords and the state positively encouraged emigration. In the earliest phase of highland emigration to North America groups from Inverness-shire went to Georgia, North Carolina and New York and established substantial communities there.²⁹⁷ In the second half of the eighteenth century the repeated conflicts between Britain and France reduced

²⁹⁵ *Hansard*, 5th series, vol. 708 (House of Commons), col. 1095, 16 Mar. 1965.

²⁹⁶ T.M. Devine, *Clanship to Crofters' War: The Social Transformation of the Scottish Highlands* (Manchester, 1994), 175–84

²⁹⁷ Anthony Parker, *Scottish Highlanders in Colonial Georgia: The Recruitment, Emigration and Settlement at Darien* (Athens, Georgia and London, 1997); Duane Meyer, *The Highland Scots of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 1957); T.C. Smout, N.C. Landsman and T.M. Devine, ‘Scottish emigration in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’, in N. Canny (ed.), *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration 1500–1800* (Oxford, 1994).

the level of opportunity for transatlantic emigration but in the periods of peace emigration was quick to revive. The American revolution had changed the political context in the New World. Many highlanders had supported the Crown during the revolution and substantial numbers migrated from what was now the USA to Upper Canada. They were joined by large numbers of new emigrants from the highlands who now favoured such locations as Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. Although historians have debated the extent to which these emigrants were the victims of improvement on highland estate or participated in a more voluntary ‘people’s clearance’ in virtual protest at these changes, there is no question that the increasingly commercialised outlook of landowners was precipitating emigration.²⁹⁸ In the early nineteenth century this was of such concern to the government that legislative attempts were made to regulate emigration, in the guise of humanitarian concern for the conditions on board vessels crossing the Atlantic, by making it more expensive. Further, projects such as the construction of the Caledonian Canal aimed to provide work to keep highlanders at home.²⁹⁹ In the nineteenth century the context of emigration was entirely different and here can be found much of the raw material for the imagery with which this chapter commenced. The industries which had sustained the highland economy in the previous generation – kelp harvesting, fishing, military recruitment – were all undermined and the population was thrown back onto the resources of the land. In this context the landlords reversed their position on the desirability of emigration. No sooner had they sought to regulate the passenger trade than

²⁹⁸ J.M. Bumsted, *The People’s Clearance, 1770–1815* (Edinburgh, 1982); Marianne McLean, *The People of Glengarry: Highlanders in Transition, 1745–1820* (Montreal, 1991).

²⁹⁹ Eric Richards, *A History of the Highland Clearances, Volume 2: Emigration, Protest, Reasons* (London, 1985), 179–280.

they worked in the opposite direction in order to facilitate the disposal of a population, once valuable as a labour force, but now redundant and potentially burdensome.

In increasingly difficult economic conditions landlords turned to a new style of clearance. Whereas the ‘first phase’ of clearance had been about social engineering and coercing populations into crofting communities the new phase was aimed at the reduction of population through emigration. It is not without reason that the relevant chapter in a recent book is entitled ‘Human selection and enforced exile’.³⁰⁰ This was especially evident during 1836–7 when poor harvests led to a subsistence crisis and then even more markedly so in the Highland famine from 1846 to 1855. This traumatic decade saw a decisive shift in landlord and state attitudes to emigration and the beginning of a period of at least seventy years in which emigration was the preferred solution to what the government increasingly began to see as the highland ‘problem’. On a range of estates across the highlands emigration was used in an aggressive fashion as a tool of estate management. It was most obvious on the estate of Sir James Matheson on the island of Lewis and on the island of Tiree, owned by the Argyll family and run from the early 1840s by George Douglas Campbell who became the eighth duke in 1847. Matheson’s factor, John Munro MacKenzie, and Argyll developed a targeted strategy of coercing tenants with small and indebted holdings into emigration. Other estates, such as that of John Gordon of Cluny in Barra and South Uist took a more comprehensive approach to

³⁰⁰ Devine, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 107–24.

the thinning of their population and were condemned for their brutal methods as well as their overall objectives.³⁰¹

*

The famine period had seen the culmination of the new phase of clearance and emigration in the nineteenth-century highlands. Clearance in this period was closely associated with emigration and many landlords provided money to assist emigrants with their journey. This means that the class who were emigrating in this period began to include those who would not have had the resources to be able to finance their own emigration, thereby emphasising the changing social composition of emigrant parties. It is also evident that the geographical focus of emigration was altered in this period. Australia and New Zealand began to assume a much more prominent place in the outflow of people from Scotland in the decade of the highland famine, especially from the early 1850s. The longer and more expensive journey to the Antipodes meant that assistance was crucial to this movement.³⁰² Assistance was also provided by philanthropy, most of this was channelled through organisations such as the Highlands and Islands Emigration Society which provided subsidy to those who were too poor to pay for their own passage. Many of the almost 5000 emigrants assisted by the Society came from estates in the Hebrides whose landlords could not afford to provide assistance, especially the Island of Skye.³⁰³

³⁰¹ A.G. Newby, 'Emigration and Clearance from the Island of Barra, c. 1770–1858', *TGSI*, 61 (2003), 116–48.

³⁰² T. M. Devine, *The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1988), 192–209.

³⁰³ Devine, *Famine*, 245–68.

Another feature which became emphasised in the 1850s was the ideological support from the Whig government for emigration as a 'solution' to the problems of the Scottish highlands. This is abundantly clear from the 1851 report into highland conditions conducted by the Chairman of the new organisation established to oversee the reformed Scottish poor law: Sir John MacNeill. MacNeill was a highlander, from Colonsay, but had spent most of his career in the service of the state and empire in locations such as India and Persia.³⁰⁴ In common with many men of this background MacNeill believed that poverty was only exacerbated by charitable relief and that to effect a permanent solution individuals had to accept responsibility for their own fate. In the specific case of the Scottish highlands he believed that crises had recurred through a combination of overpopulation and reliance on doles, both of which were demoralising forces. These forces had led the inhabitants to

erroneous and exaggerated notions of their rights, and especially with reference to the occupation of land, and to some supposed obligation on the part of the nation, or the government as representing the nation, to provide them with employment and the means of subsistence where they reside; and thus to relieve them from the necessity of going from home to look for employment.³⁰⁵

His report represents a determined view that only the emigration of a substantial number could prevent future occurrences of famine. His objective was to ensure that government would not be required to intervene further in the region. He concluded:

³⁰⁴ *ODNB*

³⁰⁵ MacNeill Report, iv.

There is good reason to hope that this season will pass away not certainly without painful suffering, but without the loss of any life in consequence of the cessation of eleemosynary aid. But if henceforward the population is to depend on the local resources, some fearful calamity will probably occur before many years unless a portion of the inhabitants of those parishes remove to where they can find the means of subsistence in greater abundance, and with greater certainty, than they can find them where they are now.³⁰⁶

This was a representative expression of the orthodoxy of the middle of the nineteenth century. Indeed, this was one report on highland conditions which led to action in the shape of the Emigration Advances Act of 1851 which provided funds to landlords for the assistance of emigration from their estates. These views would continue to be expressed until at least the outbreak of the Great War. In the more contested political atmosphere of the later part of this period they were challenged vigorously by the crofters' movement. No such entity existed in the 1850s but it should not be thought that there was no challenge to the view that emigration was inevitable and desirable. The newly established Free Church of Scotland was strong in the regions which had been visited by famine and among its leading ministers were figures, such as James Begg, who were keen to refute such views and to argue that MacNeill had made up his mind about his recommendations before he set out to write his report.³⁰⁷ The newspaper of the Free Church was clear in its opposition to the orthodoxy expressed by MacNeill and the measures to which it led:

³⁰⁶ MacNeill Report, xlvii.

³⁰⁷ *Witness*, 22, 29 Jan., 1, 15, 22 Mar., 12, 26 Apr. 1851.

To remove from the country a large body of our very best people, Protestants too, and many of them the salt of the earth, and that in order to make room for sheep and deer, is what no true lover of his country could, after due reflection, propose;—yet such is the measure proposed by the government on Tuesday, in dealing with the Highlands. We object to the measure as purely a landlords' one. We do not doubt it is the result of landlords' influence. The people are completely ignored. Their well being is a matter of trivial moment. Let us rid the country of them; let them die at sea, or let them perish in the biting frosts of North America;—but they must not remain as a burden on reclaiming landlords. Extensive emigration carries away the able, the industrious, the enterprising, leaving a mass of pauperism more wretched than ever, inasmuch as the great source of its subsistence is withdrawn.³⁰⁸

There was even some opposition among figures from the proprietorial class, although this was exceptional. Dr John MacKenzie, a younger son of the MacKenzie of Gairloch family, argued that if highland agriculture was put on a scientific footing then the region would be able to support many more people and the need for emigration would be obviated. MacKenzie was a published critic of the MacNeill report, and the Whig political orthodoxy that he perceived as lying behind it. He regarded this as a significant wrong turning in the development of policy for the highlands.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁸ *Witness*, 26 Jul. 1851.

³⁰⁹ John MacKenzie, *Letter to Lord John Russell on Sir John MacNeill's Report on the State of the West Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1851); Neil MacGillivray, 'Dr John MacKenzie (1803 –

Like so many features of highland history in this period there was an Irish parallel. Indeed, government thinking about emigration was stimulated by the famine in Ireland and later translated to the highlands. The ideological context for dealing with these twin crises in what metropolitan civil servants and politicians saw as the periphery of the United Kingdom was a shared one. Key officials like MacNeill and, to an even greater extent, Sir Charles Trevelyan, were involved in the administration of famine relief and emigration in both Scotland and Ireland and believed that overpopulation had led to crisis and that cycle could be broken by the promotion of emigration. This was a political choice which would recur frequently in the period down to the 1920s. The debate would be particularly contested in the 1880s but elements of the anti-emigration case which the crofters' movement articulated in that decade can be seen in the response of Begg and the *Witness* in the 1850s.

*

Given the changed context of the 1880s and the extent to which the crofters had asserted their own position, which was strongly opposed to emigration, it might be thought that a change would have been evident. In common, however, with a range of continuities in that decade, it was clear that emigration was still very much part of perceived solutions to the problems of the region. The 1880s were also a decade of very high levels of emigration from Scotland, possibly even higher than the outflow of the famine period. Across the decade as a whole 7 people emigrated for every 1000 in the population and in

86): proponent of scientific agriculture and opponent of highland emigration', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 33 (2013), 81–100.

some years the figure was much higher than that, 9.1 in 1888 for example. Only Norway, with a figure of 14.2, and Ireland with an emigration rate of 9.5 per 1000, exported more people from Scotland in this decade. Italy, often thought of as an archetypal ‘emigrant nation’ had a rate of 3.4 in the 1880s.³¹⁰ Shifting emigrant destinations were also a notable feature by this decade: the traditional movement of people to Imperial locations such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa was being overtaken by emigration to the United Kingdom’s greatest global competitor – the United States of America. In the 1880s around 75 per cent of Scottish emigrants went directly to the USA and many others may have crossed the border after initial landfall in Canada. The migration to the USA in this period has been characterised as overwhelmingly from urban areas although many of these emigrants will have had rural roots, including from the highlands.³¹¹ This was regarded with displeasure in many quarters, including in the highlands. The *Northern Chronicle*, a Conservative newspaper published in Inverness in the 1880s, and a strong supporter of emigration generally, deprecated emigration to the USA. Emigration to the empire, on the other hand, had the capacity to convert land ‘now worth little or nothing’ into ‘blooming gardens and rich fields’.³¹²

Despite the evidence which they had heard emigration was a key element of the Report produced by Lord Napier and his colleagues in 1884. Indeed, it could be argued that this was the key element of their report since none of the other proposals, especially those on

³¹⁰ Angela McCarthy, ‘The Scottish diaspora since 1815’, in T.M. Devine and Jenny Wormald (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Scottish History* (Oxford, 2012), 515–17

³¹¹ Charlotte Erickson, ‘Who were the English and Scottish emigrants to the United States in the late nineteenth century’, in her *Leaving England: Essays on British emigration in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, New York, 1994), 87–125; Michael Flinn, *Scottish Population History* (Cambridge, 1977), 451.

³¹² *Northern Chronicle*, 1 Jun. 1881.

land tenure, could be implemented without it. The Commissioners admitted that they had heard evidence which had 'repeatedly stated that there is no need for emigration'. Nevertheless, this section of the report argued that 'the prevailing land agitation had not been without considerable influence in prompting the expressed dislike to emigration' and looked forward to a time when 'overpopulation is clearly shown under any distribution of land' and the people's aversion to emigration will disappear'.³¹³ This was almost a direct challenge to the crofters' movement which had argued that emigration should not be contemplated when considerable amounts of land were being used for sport and extensive grazing. The report showed, as McNeill had concluded in 1851, that very few crofters could afford to pay for their own emigration. The Commissioners were also right when they concluded that not 'much direct assistance be expected from the proprietors of these impoverished parts'. State assistance was objected to on the grounds that it weakened the self-reliance of the recipients. The conclusion was that emigration from the highlands was as necessitous as it had been in 1851 and that the direction of such a policy should be 'placed under the immediate direction of the officers of the Imperial Government rather than under the control of the local authorities'.³¹⁴ This was also reminiscent of the 1850s, when McNeill and Trevelyan played a prominent role in the encouragement of emigration from the highlands. Emigration was also part of the government's thinking about Ireland. The Cowper and Richmond Commissions had recommended it as an expedient, it was provided for in a series of acts, including the Irish Land Act of 1881 and the Arrears Act of 1882, and 25,000 emigrants were assisted on

³¹³ Napier Commission, 103.

³¹⁴ Napier Commission, 103–8.

their journeys to Canada under these provisions.³¹⁵ In the event the Napier Commission suggested granting security of tenure to all crofters with land worth more than £6 per annum, the rest were to be encouraged to emigrate. This was a more benign version of the surgical excisions of the small tenants in arrears suggested and practiced by landlords such as Argyll and Matheson. Nevertheless, the fact that the Napier Commission raised this question stimulated a debate about emigration and its relationship to redistribution of land which, although it had many echoes of that which had taken place in the 1850s, was more intense and contested than had been the case in earlier periods. It is striking that one of the few evicting landlords from the 1840s who was still alive, very much so in fact, was the eighth duke of Argyll. He had inherited his title from his father in 1847 but had been running the estates for some time prior to that date. As we have seen, he conducted policies of eviction and emigration in the 1840s on Tiree and Mull. By the 1880s, however, he felt the need to repackage these policies to make the emigration look more ‘voluntary’ than it was in reality and to give the impression of generosity on his part for assisting such a movement with contributions totalling £16,000.³¹⁶ Nevertheless, although he altered the tone of his public pronouncements on the subject in private he was more direct and used a voice straight from the 1850s. In an interesting letter to the future Crofter MP for Argyll, Donald MacFarlane, he was blunt:

³¹⁵ Gerard Moran, ‘Escape from hunger: the trials and tribulations of the Irish state-aided emigrants in North America in the 1880s’, *Studia Hibernica*, 29 (1995–7), 197–208.

³¹⁶ George Douglas Campbell, eighth duke of Argyll, *Crofts and farms in the Hebrides; being an account of the management of an island estate for 130 years* (Edinburgh, 1883); Kirsteen Mulhern, ‘The intellectual duke: George Douglas Campbell, eighth duke of Argyll, 1823–1900’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2006, 28–48; Devine, *Famine*, 226–42.

Your tacit assumption that the increase of population is always an indication of prosperity without reference to the condition of that population, is one that cannot be sustained. Men have emigrated from the western highlands since the end of the last century, because all classes in that country had the sense to see that unless they did so the population would be steeped in increasing poverty, and would be exposed to recurring famine.³¹⁷

The crofters' movement on the other hand expressed consistent opposition to emigration throughout the 1880s. Like the expansion of deer forests, emigration clashed directly with their view that there was land to be redistributed for the existing population of the highlands. Charles Fraser MacKintosh, later to be a Crofter MP, added a note of dissent to the main report of the Napier Commission expressing his opposition to emigration; a position contrary to his earlier views on the topic.³¹⁸

From the beginnings of the crofters' agitation in the late 1870s through to the conclusion of its main phase a decade later, opposition to emigration was a key feature of the rhetoric which it produced. Different arguments were used at different times. John Murdoch suggested that emigration retarded the development of the highland economy because potentially productive people left the region.³¹⁹ In the aftermath of the Napier Commission's recommendation of emigration for those with little or no land the *Oban Times* expressed its opposition in interesting terms, suggesting that this group made 'poor

³¹⁷ Inveraray Castle Mss, Bundle 865, Argyll to MacFarlane, 2 Nov. 1882.

³¹⁸ Napier Commission, p.137; Ewen A. Cameron, *The Life and Times of [Charles] Fraser Mackintosh, Crofter MP* (Aberdeen, 2000), 133.

³¹⁹ *Highlander*, 1 Aug. 1879, 13 Feb. 1880, 29 Dec. 1880.

emigrating material'.³²⁰ The classical argument from this point of view was the idea that emigration ought not to be contemplated when land was available for redistribution if it was only used more effectively.

The absolute fact remains that there is at present land in Lewis under deer which might sustain human life; and so long as this is so, the people will look upon emigration as the last remedy only for their distress.³²¹

Although the crofters won a partial victory as a result of the Crofters Act of 1886 (unlike the Irish land act of 1881, on which it was modelled, it contained no provisions to assist emigration) there were other ways in which older attitudes remained in place and the theme of emigration is one such continuity.³²² In some ways this was a battle which the crofters still had to fight, especially during the period from 1886 to 1905 when British government was dominated by the Conservative party. These governments had a very clear idea of what they wanted to do in the highlands and emigration was central to their strategy. Although they did not put Liberal policy of land reform into reverse they initiated other approaches aimed at the economic development of the region through land purchase and improvements to the infrastructure – railways, telegraph facilities, piers and harbours – of the highlands. A more diverse highland economy, it was thought, would reduce the dependence of the crofting community on the land and produce a more stable structure. In this project the Conservative government had the support of the landed

³²⁰ *Oban Times*, 3 May 1884.

³²¹ *Oban Times*, 18 Feb. 1888.

³²² James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh, 1976), 178.

proprietors and among the areas of consensus was the need for an emigration scheme.³²³

In a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Scottish Secretary, Lord Lothian, asserted that without ‘a regular scheme of emigration’ the problems of the highlands were ‘insoluble’.³²⁴ At first sight the situation looks very similar to the 1850s but governments of that period would not have been interested in an interventionist policy of economic development and it was soon to become clear that the policy of emigration was to be contested.

A regular scheme of emigration did not emerge in the aftermath of the Crofters Act but an ill-considered and hastily implemented colonisation scheme was attempted in 1888 and 1889. Lord Lothian despatched Malcolm MacNeill to canvass for families who wished to emigrate to Manitoba where 160 acre parcels of land had been identified in a deal between the British government, the Canadian government and land companies. MacNeill was the nephew of Sir John MacNeill who had produced the seminal report of 1851 and he shared many of his uncle’s ideas about the utility of emigration as a policy. He had clearly been unaffected by the evidence given to the Napier Commission, whose secretary he had been. MacNeill, in an echo of some of the language which was used in the 1850s, said that he ‘took the poorest he could find’ for the colonisation scheme but that he was hampered by the opposition of the leaders of the people, such as the Balallan schoolmaster Donald Macrae, and the clergy. He argued that emigration was the necessary complement of security of tenure, a position similar to that contained in the

³²³ NRS, Lothian Muniments, GD40/16/25/2–11, Memorial of proprietors of landed estates.

³²⁴ NRS, GD40/16/25/16, Lothian to G.J. Goschen, 10 Aug. 1889.

Napier Report of 1884.³²⁵ The failure of this scheme in both practical and human terms is of interest for a number of reasons. First, it provided a check to the developing government interest in the idea of colonisation as a policy to deal with social problems in urban as well as rural Britain. Second, and more relevant to the highlands, is the way in which the debate over the scheme demonstrated the degree to which emigration was contested and measured the extent to which, at this moment, the crofters' movement could make its opposition to emigration stick among its supposed constituency. It has been suggested that the scheme collapsed because of the opposition of the crofters' movement.³²⁶ It is true that the Land League in Lewis and Harris did try to disrupt the organisation of the scheme. But there is more evidence to suggest that this attempt at colonisation collapsed under the weight of its own problems, especially when the difficult experience of the 1888 settlers in Manitoba became known in Lewis and Harris, providing a deterrent to others to follow their lead to the Canadian west. As has been pointed out, however, what is undeniable is that nearly 500 families from Lewis and Harris could be found, at extremely short notice, who were willing to emigrate. This suggests that the Land League's opposition to emigration was not shared by a substantial minority in one of their areas of strength.³²⁷

Enthusiasts for emigration on both sides of the Atlantic attempted a further scheme in the early 1890s to take highlanders to British Columbia to help to stimulate the deep-sea

³²⁵ Parliamentary Papers, 1889 (274), *Report from the Select Committee on Colonisation*, evidence of Malcolm MacNeill, Qs 371–5, 418–20, 455–6, 500, 699.

³²⁶ Stuart MacDonald, 'Crofter colonisation in Canada, 1886–1892: the Scottish political background', *Northern Scotland*, 7 (1986–7),

³²⁷ Wayne W. Norton, 'Malcolm MacNeill and the emigrationist alternative to highland land reform, 1886 to 1893', *SHR*, 70 (1991), 16–30.

fishery industry of that province. Its failure to come to fruition was hardly a surprise after the abandonment of the colonisation scheme of 1888 but it is interesting in being an imperial example of the long-running idea that the fishing industry could provide a solution to the problems of the highlands. This scheme ran into the same difficulty encountered by domestic attempts to stimulate fishing – the lack of enthusiasm of the hebridean crofter for full-time employment in that industry.³²⁸ The failures of the schemes of the 1880s did not prove a deterrent to promoters of emigration in the 1920s when the Scottish Office and the government of British Columbia attempted to cooperate with similar objectives to their predecessors of the 1880s. On this occasion the attempt to use emigration as a policy for dealing with the problems of the highland crofters was complemented in Canada by the desire, racist in origin, to reduce the prominence of Japanese labour in the salmon-fishing industry.³²⁹

The debate over highland emigration was played out in the evidence given by several leading figures from the highlands to the Select Committee on Colonisation which was established during the controversy. This committee included among its members the Crofter MP for Caithness Dr G.B. Clark, a man of radical views on social questions and a strong opponent of emigration as a solution to the highland land problem. Indeed, he complemented this by arguing that ‘there may be some reason for clearing your large towns and sending away people so that they may have a chance of a comfortable life elsewhere’ but that this was not appropriate for the highlands because there were

³²⁸ Jill Wade, ‘The “Gigantic Scheme”: crofter immigration and deep-sea fisheries development for British Columbia, 1887–93’, *BC Studies*, 53 (1982), 28–44.

³²⁹ Michael E. Vance, ‘British Columbia’s twentieth-century crofter emigration schemes: a note on new sources’, *Scottish Tradition*, 18 (1993), 1–27.

‘millions of acres of splendid land going back to a state of nature’.³³⁰ This source has not been much used by historians but it contains material which strikes at the heart of the main issue which was being debated in this period: was there enough land for the people in the highlands and islands or could a portion of the population be identified for whom it would be beneficial for them, the country and the empire that they should emigrate? Activists who claimed to articulate the point of view of the crofter argued that this was not the case. The veteran land reformer John Murdoch gave evidence which is reminiscent of the debate among historians of late eighteenth-century emigration from the highlands. He argued that there was not a genuine enthusiasm for emigration but that the shortage of land left them no option but to leave: ‘they wanted to go just as I said, as the hens will fly from the dog’. He went on to condemn emigration as a ‘bad policy’ and a ‘crime’.³³¹ He argued that the population of the highlands had been affected over the course of the nineteenth century by the consistent emigration of the ‘prime of the people’ leaving behind a ‘comparatively wretched body of men’. The effect of the fact that the best of the population went abroad was exacerbated by the way in which those who remained were denied access to the land which they needed for subsistence. He concluded that ‘if we are to think of keeping up a fine population in this country we must cherish the people at home’.³³² This was an argument against emigration which would be heard frequently, especially during the 1920s and 1930s when emigration coincided with economic depression. The case against emigration was also expressed by Murdoch’s journalistic rival, Alexander Mackenzie. He denied that there was any enthusiasm for

³³⁰ *Parliamentary Debates*, 4th series, vol. 5, cols. 1210.

³³¹ PP 1890 (354), *Report from the Select Committee on Colonisation*, evidence of John Murdoch, Qs 4447, 4462

³³² *Select Committee on Colonisation*, Murdoch, Qs 4434, 4439–44.

emigration, especially since the passage of the 1886 act which was ‘regarded as the thin end of the wedge of legislation which will ultimately restore the land to the people on equitable terms’.³³³ The orthodox pro-emigration case voiced by Malcolm MacNeill was echoed by that of an Edinburgh lawyer, Peacock Edwards. He was a partner in the firm Skene, Edwards and Garson who acted as agents for a number of highland estates and who had assisted the proprietor of Benbecula, South Uist and Barra, Lady Gordon Cathcart, send out around 65 families to the North West Territories on a privately funded colonisation scheme in 1883–4. Edwards went on to argue that any opposition to emigration which was evident in the Hebrides was due to the activities of professional ‘agitators’ and clergymen who did not want to see the numbers in their congregations dwindle.³³⁴

*

The context for emigration in the 1920s was different from that in earlier period, although there were some continuities. To an even greater extent than the 1880s the 1920s were a decade of emigration from Scotland. Such was the extent of movement in this period that, uniquely in modern Scottish history, the natural increase in population between two census dates was eradicated by emigration. This remarkable movement was heavily concentrated in the early part of the decade, especially 1922 and 1923 and was consistent with the general pattern of Scottish emigration since 1815 in that the bulk of those who

³³³ *Select Committee on Colonisation*, Alexander Mackenzie, Q 4801.

³³⁴ *Select Committee on Colonisation*, Peacock Edwards, Qs 3622–95, 3703–19

left were skilled workers from the industrial areas.³³⁵ This does not mean, however, that emigration was not an important feature of highland history in this period. Indeed, in the form of the departures from Lewis of the liners Marloch and Metagama, we have iconic moments in the history of highland emigration. The context was also different in terms of the relationship between emigration and the land question. As we have seen, in the 1880s emigration was discussed in the context of land hunger. Crofters' movement spokesmen argued that security of tenure would choke off emigration. This did not seem to be the case in the long term. By the 1920s there had been nearly forty years' experience of that state of affairs but in 1919 a very powerful land settlement act had been passed which gave the government the tools to redistribute land and, indeed, to acquire ownership of it. There was also another new element to the context of highland emigration in the shape of the Empire Settlement Act of 1922. This piece of legislation was promoted by imperialists in the Cabinet such as Lord Milner and Leo Amery. Their lobbying had been successful in overturning earlier scepticism about assisted emigration in the Colonial Office.³³⁶ In commending it to Parliament in 1922 Amery argued that the emigrants would benefit in body and mind from the 'abundant space and sunshine' which the Empire could offer and the 'old mother country' would also benefit from a 'new vision of empire pulsing through [its] veins'.³³⁷ The Act provided a huge budget of £3m per annum to assist emigration and the settlement of colonists in Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand. Over the next fifteen years over 400,000 people left the UK for imperial

³³⁵ Marjory Harper and Nicholas Evans, 'Socio-economic dislocation and inter-war emigration to Canada and the United States: a Scottish snapshot', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 34 (2006), 529–92.

³³⁶ John A. Schultz, 'Finding homes fit for heroes: the Great War and empire settlement', *Canadian Journal of History*, 18 (1983), 99–110.

³³⁷ *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th series, vol. 153, cols 590–1.

destinations.³³⁸ This piece of legislation had many objectives: relief of economic pressure at home, the provision of facilities of returning ex-servicemen, development of the empire. Although it had relevance much wider than the highlands it is also important in this context. It can be seen as the culmination of the idea that the government ought to promote emigration as a means of countering perceived overpopulation in the highlands. This idea went back to MacNeill's recommendations of 1851 and even to the report of a Select Committee on Emigration which sat in the aftermath of the 'famine' of 1836. Whigs of the middle of the nineteenth century would have been disquieted by the expenditure of £6m but the extent of emigration and the apparent enthusiasm of the people for relocation to Canada and other locations would have been more to their liking. There were also continuities in the terms in which the debate was conducted and it is striking that those who were sceptical about the value of emigration used the highlands as the key example to support their case. This was helped by the coincidence of the second reading of the Empire Settlement Act taking place on the same day as the publication of a report on the extent of deer forests in Scotland.³³⁹ Opposition MPs argued that this form of land use 'results not only in driving sheep and cattle off the land but in driving human beings as well'. The war record of the highlanders was also referred to in alleging that it was both unjust and a waste of public money to encourage them to 'go to the other side of the world instead of going back to the land in Scotland which bred such heroes in the past'.³⁴⁰

³³⁸ Marjory Harper, *Emigration from Scotland Between the Wars: Opportunity or Exile?* (Manchester, 1998), 16–17.

³³⁹ PP VII 1922, *Report of the Departmental Committee appointed to enquire and report with regard to Lands in Scotland used as Deer Forests*,

³⁴⁰ *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th series, vol. 153, col. 631 (Josiah Wedgwood), see also col. 601 for comments of a similar nature by Sir Donald MacLean.

The outflow from the highlands was part of the much wider Scottish exodus of the 1920s but once again the best-known moments come from events in the highlands. In April 1923 two liners of the Canadian Pacific company, the Marloch and the Metagama, came to Hebridean waters to collect 600 emigrants from Lochboisdale in South Uist and Stornoway in Lewis. Having the emigrant ship sail directly to Canada from the Hebrides was something which Malcolm MacNeill had suggested in the 1880s as a means of reducing the expense of the journey by cutting out travel to and accommodation in Glasgow or Greenock, the traditional departure points. The group from Lewis was dominated by young men whereas the Marloch's passengers included a larger number of family groups. There is also an even longer continuity in the case of the largely Roman Catholic group who boarded the Marloch at Lochboisdale in that they were led by their own priests and the party had been organised by Andrew Macdonell, a former member of the Benedictine order who had found a new vocation as an assertive emigration agent on his own account.³⁴¹ There was further large-scale movement of about 700 people in 1924 as the Marloch returned to the Minch and was joined by a White Star liner, Canada. Contemporary comment noted the comparative lack of reaction compared to earlier scenes of emotional outpouring on such occasions. Whilst there may not have been genuine, positive enthusiasm for emigration it seemed that departures were becoming a normal and accepted feature of hebridean life. These events took place at an interesting time in the history of the long island in the inter-war period. There two crucial developments which may have helped to create the conditions for such large-scale

³⁴¹ Marjory Harper, 'Crofter colonists in Canada: an experiment in empire settlement in the 1920s', *Northern Scotland* 14 (1994), 69–108.

emigration. The first was the effective conclusion of the grandiose schemes of Lord Leverhulme in Lewis. His hopes for an industrialised fishing industry to develop the economy of the island had come to nothing. The continuing importance of the land question, which Leverhulme completely failed to understand, clashed with his plans and wider problems in his business empire led to his withdrawal first from Lewis to Harris and then from the Hebrides entirely. As a result a considerable labour force formerly employed on road- and house-building schemes was available for emigration. Second, the government's feeling that it had a statutory duty to implement a policy of land settlement was also problematic from Leverhulme's point of view but land settlement had reached a significant point by 1923 and certainly by 1924.³⁴² After a slow start, which in itself caused frustration and alienation, many of the major schemes had been planned, if not implemented. Thus, despite the argument that Murdoch and other crofters' leaders had articulated since the 1870s, it did not appear that widespread land redistribution had the capacity to choke off the demand for emigration. Indeed, the security of tenure provided in 1886 and the land settlement operation of the post-war period might actually have served to stimulate emigration. Young people may have been more confident that their elderly parents were no longer at the mercy of the landlord.³⁴³ Further, land settlement could not cater for all the demand for land and disappointed applicants may have felt that emigration was their only option. The constituency of the disappointed was extensive: in Lewis there were at least 1300 applicants for land in the period 1912 to 1925 but it was only possible to create 262 new holdings and enlarge a further 278. The situation was

³⁴² Nigel Nicolson, *Lord of the Isles: Lord Leverhulme in the Hebrides* (London, 1960); Ewen A. Cameron, *Land for the People? The British Government and the Scottish Highlands, c. 1880 to 1925* (East Linton, 1996), 171–9; Gold and Gold, *Rural History*; Roger Hutchison, *The Soap Man*.

³⁴³ A point made by Harper, 'Crofter colonists', 73 and Wilkie, *Metagama*, 47.

even worse on Skye where there were a similar number of applicants but only fifty-nine new holdings and fifty-one enlargements.³⁴⁴ This also affected the way the official mind thought about emigration and produced some interesting continuities in terms of the language used to discuss the topic. In 1931 an official of the Department of Agriculture noted:

as we have secured most of the suitable land for land settlement in the purely Highland districts of the North West, little more can be done to provide for the surplus population there, except in such a semi-lowland county as Caithness.³⁴⁵

The use of the word ‘surplus’ would have been recognisable to Sir John MacNeill. It is interesting that the completion of the land settlement process, at least as far as the bureaucratic process established in 1919 permitted, had created a new ‘surplus’ of people for whom the only option was perceived to be emigration.

There is also a wider contextual point as well. The economic difficulties of the early 1920s were profound: farming and fishing were in severe distress and with the industrial economy of the lowlands in depression the traditional safety-valve of temporary migration was not capable of providing the necessary release. The wider awareness engendered by the experience of war also served to lead many to look beyond the confines of their native land for their future development. The massive outflow of the 1920s was concentrated in the early years of the decade and by the mid- to late 1920s the

³⁴⁴ *Annual Reports of the Board of Agriculture for Scotland*, 1912–25; Cameron, *Land for the People?*, 189.

³⁴⁵ NRS, AF51/175, Robert Greig (DoAS) to Sir Archibald Sinclair, 21 Nov. 1931.

numbers leaving were reduced as the USA reduced its quotas and the first flush of enthusiasm for the Empire Settlement Act passed. If the 1920s had been the decade of the emigrant the 1930s were the years when the international movement of people was at its most sluggish. Put crudely, the global nature of the economic depression of that decade stopped the channels of opportunity upon which emigrants relied. Indeed, the overall movement of people was not only of a much reduced extent but also in the opposite direction to that which prevailed in the 1920s. Fewer than 35,000 Scots emigrated in the 1930s, while over 75,000 people entered the country; many members of the latter group were disappointed emigrants from the previous decade returning home in an attempt to alleviate poverty.³⁴⁶

The early 1930s also saw contraction of the facilities for providing emigration from the highlands. Changes of government in Canada and growing fears that Britain was merely relieving unemployment through assisted emigration led to a marked loss of enthusiasm for immigration.³⁴⁷ This resulted in closure of all the Canadian Immigration offices except those at major seaports. The Inverness office was no longer available to potential highland emigrants, a change which the Department of Agriculture asked highland MPs to lobby against as they were sure that emigration would be resumed in due course.³⁴⁸

The Second World War brought emigration to a virtual standstill and in some senses the process of emigration from the highlands which began in the aftermath of Napoleonic

³⁴⁶ Harper, *Emigration from Scotland*, 6–7.

³⁴⁷ John A. Schultz, 'Canadian attitudes toward empire settlement', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 1 (1972–3), 237–51.

³⁴⁸ NRS, AF51/175, Robert Greig (DoAS) to Sir Archibald Sinclair, 21 Nov. 1931; Sinclair to Canadian High Commissioner, 2 Dec 1931.

Wars was concluded. This is not to say that there was not extensive emigration from and further depopulation of highland counties in the post-war period but it was of a different nature and it was not a matter of government policy in quite the same way. Indeed, in the post-war period the legacy of inter-war policy was problematic in terms of the national objectives of the later period. The periodic renewal of the Empire Settlement Act was often the cause of official questioning about the role of emigration. The issue was the extent to which there was a contradiction in post-war government policy in continuing to subsidise emigration, particularly to Australia, at a time when there were worries about skill shortages and other government funds were being used to provide incentives for firms to set up in Scotland in order to create employment for the same skilled tradesmen for whom emigration subsidies were available.³⁴⁹ Another element of the situation, as far as the Department of Economic Affairs in London was concerned, was that the UK was developing a foreign aid programme to developing countries but was also subsidizing highly developed countries through the emigration of highly skilled personnel, such as doctors, to places like the USA or Canada, the latter the principal destination for Scottish emigrants.³⁵⁰ The concern was most marked in the 1960s, a decade which ought to be seen as important as the 1880s or the 1920s in the history of Scottish emigration.³⁵¹ In 1961 a Committee of officials considering long-term emigration policy in advance of the 1962 renewal of the Commonwealth and Empire Settlement Act noted

³⁴⁹ The scale of assisted emigration from the UK to Australia in the post-1945 period was extensive: 1,183,408 people made the journey, see Marjory Harper and Stephen Constantine, *Migration and Empire* (Oxford, 2010), 60.

³⁵⁰ NRS, SEP17/102/6, Kelly, Dept of Health, to C.D. Smith, RDD [Regional Development Division], 15 Sep. 1966.

³⁵¹ A start is being made in trying to understand post-war emigration from Scotland, see Marjory Harper, *Scots at Large: Emigration from Scotland in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 2012).

A significant change has taken place in recent years in the character of migration from this country. No longer are the majority of migrants unskilled labourers of the type who constituted an unemployment problem in Britain in the 1920s. The modern trend is towards professional and skilled workers, urgently sought by the white Commonwealth countries to develop their economies. But with the needs of our own expanding economy and with our increasing obligation to provide technical assistance to developing Commonwealth countries these people are also wanted here. There is thus a growing competition for skill between the sending and receiving countries. This is an essential factor to be taken into account in framing future emigration policy.³⁵²

This point is particularly relevant as far as the highlands are concerned. As will be shown in a later chapter in this book much effort and some expense was incurred in trying to counter depopulation in the highlands through economic development and other means, yet during the 1960s the rate of emigration from the region was very high indeed. A further government investigation, this time within the Scottish Office undertook a detailed review of the statistical information on regional variation in emigration from Scotland. This revealed the persistence of a well-known pattern: the majority of Scottish emigrants came from the industrial areas of the lowlands. Nevertheless, the same research showed that the rate of emigration, especially to England and Wales, from the 'crofting counties' was relatively high at 9.6/1000 compared to 10.1/1000 for Scotland as a whole. Net emigration from the highlands was -4.2/1000, compared to -2.9/1000 for Scotland as

³⁵² NRS, SEP17/101/1, British Emigration Policy, Report by Interdepartmental Committee of Officials, November 1961.

a whole.³⁵³ It might be argued that highland emigration shifted to England and Wales to a greater extent in the post-war period but care has to be taken in this area given the under-recorded nature of the nineteenth-century movement south of the border.

Despite the fact that highland particularism in Scottish emigration history seems less pronounced in the post-war period than it is at earlier points in Scottish history, although the subject is under-researched, there are some points to be made. The simple fact that there was a continued large-scale outward movement deserves acknowledgement. This was a topic of concern to institutions as diverse as the Free Church of Scotland and the Scottish Trades Union Congress. The context of the period was notable compared to the years from 1815 to 1945. Government, far from encouraging emigration began to be worried about its economic impact and there were even tentative discussions about possible means of limiting the movement. This, perhaps, has something in common with the very early nineteenth century in which Thomas Telford was commissioned to report on the condition of the highlands and the proprietorial lobby pressed for the passage of the 1803 Passenger Vessels Act. Finally, the agency of the landlord was almost completely absent from the equation in the post 1945 period. Neglect or lack of investment in estate development may have indirectly motivated individuals to leave. Perhaps this was closer to Bumsted's notion of a 'people's clearance' than the years of the late eighteenth century for which the term was coined. Emigration had stamped its mark on the history of the Scottish highlands. In the post-war period there was extensive debate about the depopulation of the highlands and implicit in this was the perception that the emigration of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the underlying cause of the

³⁵³ NRS, SEP17/19, Scottish Economic Planning Board, Working Group on Population, 1966.

empty landscape. The Scottish Parliamentary motion of 2000 indicates the persistence of a perception of the link between clearance and emigration.

Chapter Five.

Developing the Highlands.

The economic history of the highlands in the modern period is closely bound up with perceptions of the region as under-developed. There has been a consistent series of attempts to try to ‘civilise’ and ‘develop’ the region through advice, investment and direct intervention from the outside. These efforts have involved central government, agencies associated with it and have often come at times of crisis, such as the Jacobite rising of 1745–6 or the famine of the 1840s. In most cases these events have involved an attempt to impose economic models developed elsewhere in order to bring the highlands up to the advanced condition of the lowlands of Scotland. Highland agriculture was often perceived as backward by the leading ideologues of improvement in lowland Scotland. This view has been compounded by a historiography which until very recently failed to take account of commercial activity within the highlands. Highland small tenants were seen as economically unproductive and the landed elites as deficient in their lack of interest in the economic and commercial possibilities of their estates. An orthodox view was established that the modern history of the region began with the termination of the Jacobite cause at Culloden in 1746 and the activities of organisations such as the Forfeited Estates Commission and the British Fisheries Society which sought to quicken the pulse of economic and commercial activity in the highlands.³⁵⁴ This was also the period in which a growing number of the highland landed elite began to take an interest

³⁵⁴ Annette M. Smith, *Jacobite Estates of the Forty-Five* (Edinburgh, 1982); Jean Dunlop, *The British Fisheries Society, 1786–1893* (Edinburgh, 1978).

in the profits to be made from sheep farming and, towards the end of the eighteenth century, the harvesting of kelp. Thus, was a narrative of highland history established in which a key element of modernity was imposed from the outside and the role of the small tenant, far less those without access to land, was to be expendable.

Another element of this perception of the highlands as an underdeveloped economic space was the failure of highlanders, and more particularly islanders, to take advantage of the potentially rich harvest of the sea. This was a source of puzzlement to lowland commentators and policy makers. As early as the seventeenth century it provided a group of lowland entrepreneurs with the idea of exploiting the fisheries of Lewis for their own profit as well as the development of the island. In the eighteenth century the British Fisheries Society was at the centre of the construction of planned villages such as Ullapool in Wester Ross and Tobermory on the island of Mull which were designed to be hubs for a more sophisticated fishing industry. In the nineteenth century organisations such as the Central Board which managed famine relief in the 1840s and early 1850s, through to the Congested Districts Board established in 1897 had as an objective the development of more concerted and commercialised fishing as a means of developing the highland economy.³⁵⁵ Most of the investigations which touched on the highland economy – certainly this was true of the Napier Commission and the West Highland Commission established by the Conservative government in the early 1890s – viewed the fishing industry as a panacea. This remained relevant in the twentieth century. Lord Leverhulme's grandiose plans for the industrialisation of the island of Lewis were based

³⁵⁵ Alison M. McCleery, 'The role of the Highland development agency with particular reference to the work of the Congested Districts Board, 1897–1912', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Glasgow, 1984).

on the transformative potential of fishing. The Highlands and Islands Development Board, often derided for trying to ‘parachute’ large-scale industrial projects into the highlands, actually placed a great deal of emphasis on the fishing industry as a means of economic stimulation.³⁵⁶

There is, however, another narrative of the economic history of the Scottish highlands which emphasises the extent to which both tenantry and elite were involved in commercial activity at a much earlier stage than the improvers and their uncritical historians have suggested. Walter Scott, although he was affected by a Tory romanticised vision of the highlands, was aware of this. He described in his novel *Rob Roy* the culture of commercial contact between the growing city of Glasgow with its Atlantic trade and the landowners and tenants of the south west highlands. Long before the 1745 rebellion commercial activities underpinned the finances of the highland elite, who were often blamed for perpetuating underdevelopment. This was evident among both Jacobite and Hanoverian families. Indeed, the archetypal Jacobite family, the Camerons of Locheil, exploited the extensive woodland on their lands in Lochaber and had an imperial investment strategy which encompassed the Caribbean and the colony in New Jersey.³⁵⁷ India was another prominent arena for highland families in search of commercial opportunity.³⁵⁸ The commercial activities of Whig families like the Campbell House of Argyll are well known. Indeed, they attempted to commercialise their estate management

³⁵⁶ James Grassie, *Highland Experiment* (Aberdeen, 1983), 1–26; James Nicolson, ‘The sea’, in Alistair Hethrington (ed.), *Highlands and Islands: A Generation of Progress* (Aberdeen, 1990), 81–99.

³⁵⁷ T.C. Smout, ‘Cutting into the pine: Loch Arkaig and Rothiemurchus in the eighteenth century’, in T.C. Smout (ed.), *Scottish Woodland History* (Dalkeith, 2002), 118–19.

³⁵⁸ Andrew MacKillop, ‘The highlands and the returning nabob: Sir Hector Munro of NOvar, 1760–1807’, in Marjory Harper (ed.), *Emigrant Homecomings: The Return Movement of emigrants, 1600–2000* (Manchester, 2005), 233–61.

at a relatively early stage.³⁵⁹ There were growing urban centres in the highlands, although they were not large even by the standards of early eighteenth-century Scotland in the years before its period of major urban growth. Towns like Inverness and Cromarty were growing in size and economic vitality in this period. They were centres for the export of commodities such as fish and the marketing of agricultural produce, as well as providing services to their hinterland. Further, economic and environmental historians have reassessed the agricultural practices of the small tenants and concluded that, far from being inefficient, they made productive use of their resources. They had coherent strategies for the enrichment and exploitation of small and scattered pieces of arable land. Extraordinary amounts of labour went into the construction of the rigs, or ‘feannagan’ where arable agriculture took place in areas, such as the east coast of Harris or the west coast of Sutherland, where arable land was at a very high premium, such was its extreme scarcity. Small tenants of this period used simple tools and techniques in a rational way to bring thousands of acres into cultivation. These strategies were deployed in an environment where supposedly more ‘advanced’ methods would not have worked. Further, in a pre-clearance era of relatively high population, arable farming to ensure subsistence was vital to the survival of the township.³⁶⁰ Isobel Frances Grant, the creator of Am Fasgadh, the Highland Folk Museum, did much to rescue the material culture of the later part of this period of highland history. Even she recognised, however, the ambivalence with which twentieth century crofters regarded the tools and objects drawn

³⁵⁹ Allan I. Macinnes, *Clanship, Commerce and the House of Stuart, 1603–1788* (East Linton, 1996), 142–51, 221–33.

³⁶⁰ Ian A. Crawford, ‘Feannagan taomaidh (lazy beds)’, *Scottish Studies*, 6 (1962); Robert A. Dodgshon, ‘Farming practice in the western highlands and islands before crofting: a study in cultural inertia or opportunity costs?’, *Rural History*, 3 (1992), 173–89; Robert A. Dodgshon, ‘Strategies of farming in the western highlands and islands of Scotland prior to crofting and the clearances’, *Economic History Review*, new ser., 46 (1993), 679–701.

from this period of their history and were unwilling on many occasions to accord any cultural value to them. Grant, it should also be said, in her written work was one of the very few historians who paid any serious attention to agricultural practice and everyday life of the highlands in the period before the mid eighteenth century.³⁶¹

The attitude of crofters to livestock husbandry was another subject of criticism. Overgrazing, failure to pick out the best stock for breeding, selling the best young lambs or calves for immediate cash, poor stock control leading to interbreeding, unhygienic milk production and the keeping of unruly fowl were all among the unscientific practices allegedly endemic among crofters. Housing conditions in the highlands, especially in the Hebrides, was another topic on which lowland observers of the highlands could wring their hands. The co-existence of stock and humans under the same roof and the general conditions in the 'blackhouse' were deemed to be in need of reform. Although the 'blackhouse' had its romantic defenders, this concern about housing conditions in the highlands ought to be seen in the context of concern about the dreadful housing conditions for the labouring population, rural and urban, of Scotland. This overall perception of highland agriculture and social life as an affront to the highest standards current in lowland Scotland were evident at the time of the passage of the Small Landholders (Scotland) Act of 1911. The lowland farming press was horrified to think that the system of tenure developed for the backward crofters of the highlands was about to be extended to cover the advanced farmers of the lowlands.³⁶²

³⁶¹ I.F. Grant, *Highland Folk Ways* (London, 1961).

³⁶² *Scottish Farmer*, 3 Sep., 26 Nov. 1910.

This is the context in which twentieth-century attempts to develop the economy of the highlands should be seen. The task was deeply imbued with perceptions that the highlands were backward and inferior and required to be brought up the standard of lowland Scotland. A review of this theme can also shed light on different ways of understanding the region. This chapter will analyse the history of economic development in the period since 1880. Three distinct periods will be identified: 1886 to 1919, 1919 to 1945 and the period since 1945. The different context of each period will be investigated but the continuities between them will also be highlighted. This will also necessitate discussion of social themes such as housing and the growth of concern, especially in the post-war period, about the environment and landscape of the region.

Although government was much less interventionist from 1880 to 1919 this was a period in which the pace of attempts to direct the economic development of the highlands began to accelerate. In an indication of the significant between the ideas of the Napier Commission and the Crofters Act of 1886, the former has a great deal to say about the highland economy, little of which was reflected in the latter. The 1886 Act did provide facilities for making loans to crofters through the Fishery Board for Scotland for the purpose of purchasing fishing boats but since only around 250 such loans were granted it did not have a transformative effect.³⁶³ Napier and his colleagues recognised that the fishing industry was vital in providing subsistence for the ‘greater number’ of the crofters and cottars and that the industry was ‘capable of vast extension and development’. The Commissioners had heard much evidence that the commercial possibilities of the fishing

³⁶³ *Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act, 1886*, section 32; *Fishery Board for Scotland, Annual Reports*, 1887–91.

industry were held back by lack of harbours, telegraph facilities and railways. They considered the extent to which it ought to be the responsibility of the state to provide this infrastructure. Their report made an interesting distinction: in cases where the benefit would be local it was felt that landowners, merchants and local authorities should make provision but where the benefit was national or 'imperial' there was justification in state intervention 'when no other agency is available'.³⁶⁴ A major point of debate concerning the fishing industry was the extent to which the very nature of crofting combined with fishing was a restraint on the commercial development of the industry. A contrast was often drawn between the crofter-fishermen of the crofting regions of the north-west highlands and Shetland and the full-time fishermen of the Moray Firth and Loch Fyne who devoted more time to fishing on a commercial basis. While some commentators argued that this was to do with fundamental differences in outlook between enterprising and indolent populations there were other factors to be taken into account. The way in which the fishing industry developed in combination with crofting from the late eighteenth century was relevant here. Crofters were reluctant fishermen partly because the foundation of the industry in the crofting regions was bound up with the coercion of the first phase of the clearances. The crofters had been placed on very small holdings, forcing them to engage in other industries, such as fishing or kelp harvesting, and the history of the crofting communities had been punctuated with the crowding of cottars onto already congested townships. This history affected the attitude of crofters to the fishing industry. This sympathetic view, articulated by Napier in his report, did not become embedded and later advocates of economic development argued strongly that full-time fishing ought to be encouraged and had the capacity to transform the region. As

³⁶⁴ Napier Commission, *Report*, 55, 57.

late as 1938 the Fishery Board for Scotland was definite in its view: fishing and crofting could not be combined to profitable effect. Without full-time fishing there was 'no real hope of the development of the fishing industry'.³⁶⁵ Its investigation into sea fisheries in the crofting counties covered much the same ground as the Commission set up by Lord Lothian forty years earlier: problems arising from lack of harbour and landing facilities; fishermen's inadequate equipment to pursue sustained commercial fishing in deeper waters. Overall, they concluded as Napier had, that the 'problem cannot be solved as a purely economic one but is part of the larger social problem of the Highlands and Islands'.³⁶⁶

From a historical point of view there are problems with this notion. Most of the fishing in the highlands was in search of herring which can be caught relatively close to the shore with boats which can, under good weather conditions, be launched from and landed on a beach. The difficulty of this kind of fishing was that the relatively small boats of the crofters could not follow the herring into deeper waters and the fishing was easily disrupted by bad weather. There was an additional, environmental, factor. The movements of the herring shoals were fickle and scientific understanding of the factors which influenced them was very limited. This made the industry liable to very extreme local fluctuations. These circumstances provided no incentive for investment.

³⁶⁵ NRS, DD15/7, Observations of the Fishery Board for Scotland on the Scottish Economic Committee Report, 19 Dec. 1938.

³⁶⁶ NRS, DD15/46, Memo by the Fishery Board for Scotland on Sea Fisheries in the Crofting Counties, 14 Dec. 1936.

Nevertheless, along with line fishing for cod and ling, this activity, undertaken in the summer months, was compatible with the crofting.³⁶⁷

The provision of larger boats and a fishery based in proper harbours could deal with some of these problems by participating in the more reliable deep-water herring fishing. These improvements required capital investment and there was little prospect of that coming from within the crofting community. Further, a merchant class capable of providing such investment was poorly developed in the western areas of the crofting counties compared to the east coast. There were also more general economic cycles in the market. A major collapse in the herring fishing occurred in the west highlands in the mid-1880s. The poverty that it induced after years of relative plenty influenced the protests on the land question. A boom had occurred in the Shetland herring fishery in the early 1880s. This led to oversupply and drove prices down until a modest recovery took place from about 1893.³⁶⁸ This very difficult period was also the cause of a fundamental shift in the relationship between fisherman and the ‘curers’ to whom they sold their catches. In times of high prices skippers of fishing boats engaged with a fish curer to sell their catch to him at a fixed price with additional bounties payable to the crews. In a period of falling prices, such as from the mid-1880s, this left the curers exposed and potentially out of pocket. As a result they began to argue for an auction system which was more sensitive to fluctuations in prices and in the quantity and quality of the catch.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ Malcolm Gray, ‘Crofting and fishing in the north-west highlands, 1890–1914’, *Northern Scotland*, 1 (1972), 89–114.

³⁶⁸ James R. Coull, *The Sea Fisheries of Scotland: A Historical Geography* (Edinburgh, 1996), 123–5.

³⁶⁹ Peter Mewett, ‘Economic brokerage and peripheral development in the Isle of Lewis’, *Sociological Review*, 31 (1983), 427–52.

During the period from 1886 to 1905, dominated politically by the Conservative party, saw concerted efforts to develop the highland economy. Lord Lothian, the Secretary for Scotland was inclined to listen to the landowners but he did visit the region and establish yet another Commission to investigate the provision of infrastructure to support the fishing industry. The West Highland Commission made two reports in 1890 and 1891 and added another voice to the criticism that the highlanders' 'want of energy' in fishing was exacerbated by their crofter/fisherman status. The Commission recommended investment in harbours, telegraphs, steamer subsidies and roads. The principal recommendation of this Commission was the construction of a new railway terminus on the west coast with the objective of stimulating the fishing industry.³⁷⁰ Indeed, in this period there might be said to have been something of a railway mania, with a variety of schemes to build new lines in the west highlands, although none of them came to fruition. In the event the existing line from Inverness through Ross-shire to the west coast was extended from Strome Ferry to Kyle of Lochalsh. Further, the West Highland Line from Glasgow to Fort William was extended to Mallaig and facilitated its growth into a major fishing port.³⁷¹

*

The idea of transformative economic development of the highlands was attractive to 'outsiders'. Looking on to the economic conditions of the region what tended to strike observers was poverty, poor housing conditions and, because of the cycles of part-time agriculture and temporary migration, a population not making the best use of their

³⁷⁰ PP, 1890 XXVII, *Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into certain matters affecting the interests of the population of the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland*.

³⁷¹ John MacGregor, *The West Highland Railway: Plans, Politics and People* (Edinburgh, 2005).

resources.³⁷² The notion of the indolent highlander is deeply embedded in external perceptions of the region. For this reason private individuals and, later, governments, believed that they could readily effect alterations in the economic structure. In most cases they were completely wrong. A remarkable example of this approach was the attempt by Lord Leverhulme to ‘develop’ the islands of Lewis and Harris in the inter-war period. William Hesketh Lever, who had built a vast fortune from his soap and chemical products and had acquired fame from his paternalistic workers’ town at Port Sunlight, purchased the island of Lewis from the remnants of the Matheson family in 1917. He had visited Lewis only briefly in 1884 (an interesting moment to be there) prior to his acquisition but the island had had a big effect on him. Leverhulme had little understanding of the crofting economy and saw, like many before and after him, a fishing industry ripe for development. His plan was to reduce the dependence of the population on the land by developing farms around Stornoway for food and milk production, enlarging the population of the town and recruiting a huge labour force to operate an industrialised fishing and fish processing industry. His plan was to control and integrate each aspect of the industry from the catching of the fish to its sale in his ‘Mac Fisheries’ retail outlets, of which there were 400 throughout the UK.³⁷³ The difficulty with this plan was the land question in Lewis. The passage of the 1919 Land Settlement (Scotland) Act provided the government with powerful means by which to create new holdings for crofters and cottars and had the effect of increasing the level of expectation over the solution of the land question. The situation was further complicated by the large body of ex-servicemen who felt that they had a claim to specific pieces of land and expressed this

³⁷² Louis MacNeice, *I Crossed the Minch* (London, 1938).

³⁷³ Nigel Nicolson, *Lord of the Isles: Lord Leverhulme in the Hebrides* (London, 1960), 75–100.

claim by land raids on the very farms – Coll and Gress – that Leverhulme had identified for milk supply to Stornoway. Leverhulme claimed that this disrupted his plan and he refused to compromise with the government or the Board of Agriculture for Scotland. Further, he attempted to divide and rule by arguing that he had support for his plans from other elements of the community in Lewis, especially the population of Stornoway and the crofters of the west coast of the island.³⁷⁴ The situation became fraught with repeated raids on the land and a remarkable ‘agreement’ of late 1920 between Leverhulme and the Secretary for Scotland, Robert Munro. Leverhulme handed over to the Board five west coast farms and the Board agreed that further land settlement activities in the island would be suspended for a decade to give Leverhulme’s plans an opportunity to reach maturity. This enraged the land raiders, who refused to settle on the west coast farms and increased their determination. The government’s preference would probably have been to find a way for land settlement and Leverhulme’s development plans to operate simultaneously.³⁷⁵ This raises the issue of whether industrial development could complement land settlement. Leverhulme thought not and this view, although not explicitly shared by policy makers was implicitly evident in the fact that the efforts towards economic development and land reform were hardly ever integrated.

Meanwhile, Leverhulme continued to pour money into the island in an attempt to develop the fishing industry. He also began housing developments in Stornoway, working with designs by Patrick Geddes. A breach occurred when Leverhulme felt that the government

³⁷⁴ Murdo MacLeod, ‘Did the people of Lewis refuse Lord Leverhulme’s schemes?’, *TGSI*, 42 (1958), 257–70.

³⁷⁵ NRS, AF67/254, Leverhulme to Munro, 1 Nov. 1920; AF83/718, Memo re agreement between BoAS and Lord Leverhulme, 1 Feb 1921; TNA, CAB24/117, ff. 265–8, Land Settlement in Lewis, memo by the Secretary for Scotland, 27 Dec. 1920.

had reneged on its part of the deal by breaking up Coll and Gress for crofts and he terminated his investment in Lewis. There is evidence that wider financial problems in the Leverhulme empire contributed to his withdrawal. His exaggeration of the potential of the fishing industry to bring prosperity, especially at a time of severe depression, was a weakness of Leverhulme's schemes.³⁷⁶ From 1923 he concentrated his attention on the Island of Harris where he found fewer difficulties over the land question since his purchase of both the North Harris and South Harris estates in 1919. He also found the attitude of the inhabitants to be more positive. They recognised Leverhulme's undoubted vanity by tolerating the renaming the settlement of Obbe as 'Leverburgh', although the former name has since come back into use once again.³⁷⁷

Leverhulme's investment in Lewis was vast. Aside from the £2.3m which was put into 'MacFisheries', he ploughed £875,000 into Lewis between 1918 and 1925 and a further £525,000 into Harris over the same period. Only about £55,000 was raised from the sale of his Hebridean estates after his death. Expressed in modern values these sums equate, by one calculation, to £70.49m.³⁷⁸ It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Leverhulme's investments were a complete failure. Aside from some housing in Stornoway they left little tangible mark and certainly did not transform the economy of the island. An indirect result of the failure of the project was the creation of the Stornoway Trust estate, extending to 70,000 acres of publicly-owned land around the town of Stornoway. Leverhulme offered the whole island to the community but the offer was not taken up

³⁷⁶ Brian Lewis, *'So Clean': Lord Leverhulme, Soap and Civilisation* (Manchester, 2008), 205–21.

³⁷⁷ Roger Hutchinson, *The Soap Man: Lewis, Harris and Lord Leverhulme* (Edinburgh, 2003), 153.

³⁷⁸ Nicolson, *Lord of the Isles*, 236–7; this is the 'historic opportunity cost' analysed as a 'project' on the website MeasuringWorth.com with 1925 used as the base year.

except for the land around Stornoway. Perceptions of his altruism might be tempered by awareness of the fact that the value of the estate on the open market was very low in the mid 1920s.

There is an interesting historical parallel in that Leverhulme's vast investment in Lewis represented the second time the island had been the recipient of the largesse of a plutocrat. Perhaps the scepticism with which Leverhulme was viewed in Lewis had something to do with memories of the activities of Sir James Matheson from 1844 to 1878 who pumped vast sums of money into the island but who continued to clear some areas of the island and permitted chronic congestion to develop in other areas. This provides a clue to the gulf between his understanding of economic development and prosperity and that of the islanders.³⁷⁹ In some public statements representatives of the latter articulated a polarity between his industrial world view and their more contemplative outlook. This may have been exaggerated for effect by those who have reported such views and may also have picked up on elements of the stereotype of the indolent crofter. Nevertheless, Leverhulme's own statements provide evidence that although he may have understood the depth of the claims for land he was unwilling to compromise on the central principles of his scheme to create an industrialised economy divorced from subsistence agriculture.³⁸⁰ Leverhulme's ideas for Lewis also came at the wrong time. The land question was particularly important at the end of the war with the combination of returning ex-servicemen who had long-standing claims and the

³⁷⁹ John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold, 'To be free and independent: crofting, popular protest and Lord Leverhulme's Hebridean development projects, 1917–25', *Rural History*, 7 (1996), 191–206; this is the principal theme of Hutchison, *Soap Man*.

³⁸⁰ Colin M. MacDonald, *Highland Journey* (Edinburgh, 1943), 134–49.

expectations created by the 1919 Land Settlement Act. The withdrawal of Leverhulme from Lewis helped to create the conditions in which large numbers of people from the island took advantage of the emigration opportunities available at the time and left on the Marloch and the Metagama in 1923 and 1924. Although Leverhulme's schemes were those of a private industrialist there are some parallels with the post-war schemes to bring large-scale economic development to the highlands. Leverhulme's notion that an essentially single-industry approach could bring about economic transformation was also present in post-war thinking, as was the idea that expansion of urban settlement could provide greater economic stimulation than investment in rural activities.

A powerful motivating force for the development of the highlands was the way in which, especially to external observers, many aspects of social conditions seemed out of step with those prevailing in other parts of Scotland. Two aspects stood out: housing and health. The advent of security of tenure provided an incentive for crofters to invest in stone-built and slate-roofed houses to replace the traditional 'black houses' which shocked many observers. Further, the land settlement schemes under the 1911 and 1919 acts improved the quality of housing in the highlands. The standard house designs of the Board of Agriculture for Scotland with their bright whitewashed walls began to dot the landscape, especially in the Hebrides, in the regular pattern dictated by new crofts. There is a strong argument that they were the most enduring contribution provided by the land settlement programme. In a sense, also, this aspect of the highland problem was one which emphasised the similarities with lowland Scotland where in both rural and urban society the standard of housing endured by the working class was dreadful. This general

problem in Scottish housing had been recognised by the Ballantyne Commission which included a special section on the particular problems of rural housing, including that in the crofting regions.

*

British governments in the 1880s and 1890s saw themselves as faced with a crisis in the rural fringes of the state, especially in Ireland but also highland Scotland. It is striking, therefore, that in seeking funds from the Treasury for highland development the Scottish Secretary argued to the Chancellor that, in combination with emigration, such investment would bring political returns in terms of a pacified region. Further, he noted that the government had already sanctioned similar expenditure in Ireland. Recent historians have argued that these schemes were ineffective, partly because they were conceived in the interests of the state rather than the Scottish highlands or Ireland but the political context of their formation is important.³⁸¹ The formation of the Congested Districts Board in 1897 was also part of this political context, as it was modelled on an Irish organisation of the same name which had been operative since 1891.³⁸² The Scottish Board was designed to facilitate the spread of crofter owner-occupation through land purchase but it also had important powers of economic development. Indeed, some have argued that it was more successful as an agency of economic development than of land reform.³⁸³ The overall effect on the highland economy of this burst of activity is difficult to judge. Despite the

³⁸¹ NRS, GD40/16/25/15–23, Lord Lothian to G.J. Goschen, 10 Aug. 1889, to W.H. Smith 18 Nov. 1889, /32–4, Lothian to Smith, 19 Feb 1891; Andrew Gailey, *Ireland and the Death of Kindness: The Experience of Constructive Unionism* (Cork, 1987).

³⁸² Donald MacKay, 'The Congested Districts Boards of Ireland and Scotland', *Northern Scotland*, 16 (1996), 141–73.

³⁸³ Alexander S. Mather, 'The Congested District Board for Scotland', in W. Ritchie, J. Stone and A.S. Mather (eds), *Essays for Professor R. E. H. Mellor* (Aberdeen, 1986), 196–200.

investment made by the government in infrastructure for the fishing industry there was little improvement by the outbreak of the Great War. The sustained period of relatively high prices for cured herring brought little enduring benefit to the crofting counties. Much of the fishing was done by boats from the east coast of Scotland. These fishermen had the capital to be able to invest in the larger boats, steam drifters were in use by 1914, required for commercial herring fishing. The granting of security of tenure and the subsequent legislation of this period had the long-term effect of consolidating traditional crofting with its emphasis on part-time agriculture supplemented by other activities. The CDB's objective of creating larger, whole-time holdings was not successful. This was significant in the longer term. By the 1930s, when agricultural conditions were extremely depressed and opportunities for temporary migration and emigration were largely closed off, conditions seemed reminiscent of the 1840s when the population was thrown back onto the subsistence resources of the land. This seemed to indicate that there had been little structural reform of the highland economy in the period since the famine.³⁸⁴ Nevertheless, although the 1886 act brought its own rigidities into the system of landholding, the security of tenure on which it was based provided the basis for the crofting community to ride out the storm of the 1930s with much less trauma than had occurred in the 1840s. The experience of the economic depression of the 1930s, especially in the Hebrides, was also affected by the extensive land-settlement operation which had taken place in the 1920s. As we have seen, this was no longer active in the crofting counties in the 1930s. Its overall effect was to leave a very large number of quite small holdings, a fact which necessitated the involvement of crofters in supplementary forms of employment, including fishing. This decade was also characterised by debate

³⁸⁴ This is what I argued in *Land for the People?*, 200.

about diversification of the economy of the region. New industries, especially those such as aluminium and carbide, associated with the development of hydro-electricity generation, formed part of the discussion.

This raised new questions about the effect of economic development on the landscape. Whereas older industries, such as fishing or kelp harvesting, had been on a small scale and with limited environmental impact, that could not be said of proposals to flood large areas of the highlands in order to generate electricity. Although this debate was on a new scale it had roots in the years before the Great War. Aluminium had first been manufactured in Scotland at plants at Foyers on the southern shores of Loch Ness from the late 1890s and then a decade or so later on a larger scale at Kinlochleven in northern Argyll. The latter development involved epic feats of engineering to take water from Loch ? in pipes and channels down to the factory at the almost entirely new settlement of Kinlochleven. The latter was an industrial company town in the mould of mining villages in west Fife or Ayrshire. So much so, in fact, that serious consideration was given to naming it ‘Aluminiumville’!³⁸⁵ There had been extensive debate over the effect on the landscape of the development at Foyers, the location of the scenic and attractive Falls which drew large numbers of tourists. The potential for the highlands to generate electricity was seen by some as a tangible way in which the region could participate in the modern life of the country. As far back as the late nineteenth century advocates of this view included the journalist Duncan Campbell, editor of the *Northern Chronicle*. He felt that this would assist in the decentralisation of industry and facilitate the ‘emancipation

³⁸⁵ Andrew Perchard, *Aluminiumville: Government, Global Business and the Scottish Highlands* (Lancaster, 2012), 272–319.

of individualism' as well as the economic development of the highlands and the retention of population through the application of modern scientific ideas.³⁸⁶ The vision of this Conservative journalist was similar to that of a socialist journalist who later became Secretary of State for Scotland: Thomas Johnston.

The debate about electricity generation in the highlands developed markedly in the inter-war period. In the 1920s and 1930s large-scale capitalist enterprise sought to harness the water resources of the highlands. The aluminium industry, which had a tradition in the highlands, developed a major new smelter at Fort William. This was, to an even greater extent than the pre-war project at Kinlochleven, a feat of engineering. Water was taken from Loch Treig through a tunnel to the hillside above Fort William and then down two massive pipes into the power house at the Smelter. This project was carried through without extensive protests. This may have been due to the minimal effect it had on the landscape. The water level of Loch Treig, alongside which the West Highland line runs, was raised slightly, and a dam was constructed which raised the level of Loch Laggan.³⁸⁷

By the time of this 'Lochaber scheme' in the late 1920s, the British Aluminium Company was regarded as a bringer of jobs and potential prosperity to the highlands. This makes it all the more puzzling that between 1928 and 1941 an unlikely combination of political interests grouped to vote down seven hydro-electric schemes in the highlands. The most

³⁸⁶ Duncan Campbell, *Reminiscences and Reflections of an Octogenarian Highlander* (Inverness, 1910), 569, see also his editorials in the *Northern Chronicle*, 19 Jan. 1881, 19 Sep. 1900.

³⁸⁷ Perchard, *Aluminiumville*, 8–9, has an effective illustration of the whole scheme.

contentious of these were the three ‘Caledonian Power Schemes’ of the late 1930s.³⁸⁸ These were advanced by the British Oxygen Company as part of a project to build a factory for the production of calcium carbide at Corpach, near Fort William. Carbide was a vital component of oxyacetylene, an important substance for welding and, therefore, for the expansion of the armaments industry. The UK had no domestic production and relied on imports from Norway and Canada, a point of potential national vulnerability at a time of increasing international tension. The opposition to the Caledonian Power scheme brought together organisations such as the Association for the Preservation of Rural Scotland and Labour MPs from industrial constituencies. The former affected concern about the aesthetic appeal of the landscape but were worried lest the flooding of areas of Glen Garry and Glen Moriston reduce sporting income. The latter were opposed to a new form of electricity generation which might threaten the interests of their coal-mining constituents. They also voiced the argument that if the water resources of the highlands were to be exploited for economic gain it should be carried out on the part of the community, rather than for the commercial benefit of a private company like the British Oxygen Company.³⁸⁹ The former Red Clydeside firebrand David Kirkwood was a noted exponent of this argument. Another former red Clydesider, Thomas Johnston, used this to his advantage to create the North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board in 1942. Other elements in the debate, especially Robert Boothby, who was retained by BOC, argued strongly that the company’s investment in the highlands was for the overall economic and

³⁸⁸ There are good accounts of the controversy in Bill Luckin, *Questions of Power: Electricity and Environment in Inter-war Britain* (Manchester, 1990), 118–37 and Clive M. Birnie, “‘New Deal’ or Raw Deal? Public Administration and Economic Development in the Highlands & Islands of Scotland, 1929–1939”, MSc thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2003, 47–61.

³⁸⁹ Peter L. Payne, *Hydro: A Study of The Development of the Major Hydro-Electric Schemes Undertaken by The North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board* (Aberdeen, 1988), 18–34; David Keir, *Desolation of the Highlands* (London, 1938), 47–51.

demographic benefit of the region, not just for private profit. This opposition would have been less significant had the government pushed the national security argument more firmly, or were there not also proposals to build a carbide factory in South Wales, and generated the necessary electricity from coal. Nevertheless, the debate outlined the terms of an argument which would be replayed many times in the highlands in the post-war period. Although there were a complex web of interests and arguments underlying the debate, the sense that there was a zero-sum game involving economic development and environmental protection was one which would remain familiar for many years.

*

A combination of factors after 1929 changed the context for thinking about highland development. The most important was the onset of a major economic depression. This was much more serious and widespread than those of the mid 1880s or the mid 1900s. Not only did it cover most sectors of the Scottish economy, including agriculture, but it was a global downturn. Although the depression brought to a halt the large-scale emigration of the 1920s, and may have induced modest return emigration, the legacy of the exodus was a sense that much valuable ‘human resource’ had been lost and that Scottish identity was under threat.³⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the 1930s also saw the beginnings of proactive suggestions for economic development from interests within the highlands; hitherto, the process had been rather top-down and driven by central government or private economic interests. The Highland Reconstruction Association attempted to

³⁹⁰ Ewen A. Cameron, *Impaled on a Thistle: Scotland since 1880* (Edinburgh, 2010), 46–54; R.J. Finlay, ‘National identity in crisis: politicians, intellectuals and the “end of Scotland”, 1920–1939’, *History*, 79 (1994), 242–59; Richard Anthony, *Herds and Hinds: Farm Labour in Lowland Scotland, 1900–1939* (East Linton, 1997), pages.

capitalise on the immediate post-war moment to argue for government investment in the highlands.³⁹¹ In the 1930s the Highland Development League drew on the contemporary inspiration of Roosevelt's 'New Deal' in the USA than on the historical precedent of the Highland Land League. The moving forces were Rev Thomas M. Murchison, the Church of Scotland minister at Glenelg, and the noted medical practitioner at Ballachulish, Dr Lachlan Grant. They had been working independently towards a similar end: a new organisation to lobby for the cause of highland development. Murchison had presented a petition to the Scottish Office on behalf of crofters in his parish who were saddled with debts to the Board of Agriculture, having taken on holdings at times of very high prices.³⁹² Grant and his location were both highly significant. Ballachulish, with its slate quarries, was an industrial community devoted to an extractive industry, in an area of the highlands that was, with the development of the aluminium industry at nearby Kinlochleven, increasingly industrialised. Grant had been the central figure in a bitter strike and subsequent lockout at the slate quarries in 1902 when the workers came out in protest at his dismissal from his position as company doctor. This dispute attracted the attention of leading figures in the Labour movement, including Hardie, and was widely covered in newspapers such as the *Labour Leader*.³⁹³ Grant continued to practice in Ballachulish until his death in 1946 and throughout that period was a consistent and

³⁹¹ Hugh F. Campbell, *Highland Reconstruction* (Glasgow, 1920).

³⁹² Donald E. Meek, 'Preacher, prose-writer, politician, journalist and scholar: the Very Rev. Dr Thomas Moffat Murchison (1907–84)', *Scottish Church History Society Records*, 36 (2006), 5–27.

³⁹³ Sydney Jones Library, University of Liverpool, GP/2/1/10, John Bruce Glasier's diary, 2 Sep. 1903; Neville Kirk, *Custom and Conflict in "the land of the Gael": Ballachulish, 1900–1910* (Monmouth, 2007); Neville Kirk, "'A state of war in the valley of Glencoe': the Ballachulish quarries dispute, 1902–5", *Scottish Labour History*, 38 (2003), 14–36.

voluble advocate of economic development in the highlands. He published widely on this theme in medical journals and newspapers.³⁹⁴

The Highland Development League was founded in Glasgow in 1936 and proved to be an effective cross-party lobby for highland economic diversification.³⁹⁵ Grant argued such development had to be comprehensive and diverse, including ‘farming, fishing, tweed-making, afforestation, mineral industries and quarrying and all the probable local industries...’.³⁹⁶ The mid-1930s was a period in which government and a wide range of political opinion was interested in the idea of economic planning. The effect of the economic depression had broadened the spectrum of politicians prepared to grant to the government a role in the economy. The National Government had passed the Special Areas Acts in 1934 and 1936, they were designed to address the problems of areas of high unemployment. This approach did not provide a model for the highland economy, which did not have conventional unemployment rates at the same level as the prostrated industrial areas of lowland Scotland. The problems of the highlands were viewed by officials as being rooted in the physical conditions of the region and the historical experience which it had undergone since the eighteenth century. It was argued that this could not be dealt with by the economic activities that the Special Areas acts were designed to stimulate. This view extended to elements of the business community in Scotland, some of whom expressed the view that economic policy made in London was insensitive to the Scottish economy in which older heavy industries were over-

³⁹⁴ The Lachlan Grant Collection at the National Library of Scotland contains cuttings of Grant’s journalism and some of his correspondence; Acc.12187.

³⁹⁵ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 20 Jan. 1936, 7.

³⁹⁶ Lachlan Grant, *A New Deal for the Highlands* (Glasgow, 1935).

represented. Organisations such as the Scottish National Development Council, in which the leading highland Liberal and nationalist politician Sir Alexander MacEwen was a founding member, and its offshoot the Scottish Economic Committee, articulated this view to a wider public.³⁹⁷ Among the series of reports which the SEC published in the late 1930s was a penetrating analysis of the condition of the highlands. The Committee which drew up this report was chaired by a Skye landowner, Edward Hilleary, included the agricultural trade unionist Joseph Duncan and was supported by Adam Collier, later killed in a mountaineering accident. His posthumously published *The Crofting Problem* (1953) was a very important analysis of the economic and social issues facing the region. Although the SEC was a non-official body there had been consultation with the government at the time of its appointment and when its investigation concluded there was a private admission that its report could not be ignored.³⁹⁸

The Hilleary Report was the most broad-ranging investigation of the condition of the highlands since the Napier Commission in the 1880s.³⁹⁹ It revealed a series of deep-seated problems which could not be dealt with by further reform to land tenure or the extension of the land settlement programme. More fundamental shifts in the economy of the region were required. The introduction of new industries based on development of the water power resources of the highlands, the development of the tourist industry, expansion of forestry and stimulation of traditional activities such as fishing and Harris-tweed weaving were at the centre of their recommendations. There was a recognition that

³⁹⁷ Angus MacKenzie, 'Self-help and propaganda: Scottish National Development Council, 1931–1939', *JSHS*, 30 (2010), 123–45; R.H. Campbell, 'The Scottish office and the special areas in the 1930s', *Historical Journal*, 22 (1979), 167–83.

³⁹⁸ NRS, DD 15/2, Notes of a meeting of officials at the Scottish Office, 7 Dec 1938.

³⁹⁹ Birnie, "'New Deal' or Raw Deal?", 66–8.

both full-time and part-time employment opportunities were required and that crofting ‘though modified by state action ... persists in the face of economic and social forces working against its survival’.⁴⁰⁰ The most important recommendation of the Committee, however, was for the appointment of a Highland Development Commissioner. This was an attempt to build on the Special Areas Acts of 1934 and 1936 which had provided for ‘Commissioners’ to oversee the development of these areas. It had been a source of frustration to many that the highlands were not included in this framework. This suggestion did not carry universal agreement. Alexander MacEwen, for one, was opposed, referring to the Commissioner as a potential ‘Dictator for the highlands’. MacEwen felt that a Commissioner could easily become an agent of government policy rather than an advocate for highland development. A permanent board led by someone with extensive experience of the highlands would, in his eyes, be likely to be more effective. MacEwen, as befitted a nationalist, also argued that ‘absentee government is as bad as absentee landlords’ and that a ‘spiritual and cultural awakening was necessary for any economic revival’. Indeed, another nationalist, Hugh Quigley, had advanced essentially the same argument in 1936. These were typical of the approach of moderate nationalists of this period who sought to reform the position of Scotland within the United Kingdom.⁴⁰¹ Across the political spectrum there was strong support for the implementation of Hilleary’s recommendations. One leading Unionist wrote to John Colville, the Secretary of State for Scotland confessing his alarm ‘at the decay of rural

⁴⁰⁰ Scottish Economic Committee, *The Highlands and Islands of Scotland: A Review of the Economic Conditions with Recommendations for Improvement* (1938), 21.

⁴⁰¹ Sir Alexander MacEwen, ‘A dictator for the highlands? The strengths and weaknesses of the Scottish Economic Committee’s Report’, *Scots Magazine*, 30 (1938–9), 293–8; see also Alexander MacEwen, *Act Now for the Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1939); Hugh Quigley, *A Plan for the Highlands, Proposals for a Highland Development Board*, (London, 1936).

life' in the highlands and expressing his unwillingness to 'inter it in the interests of financial orthodoxy'. A nationalist argued that a 'government who can afford to give a loan of £30 million to Czechoslovakia can surely afford a few millions to save the highlands from depopulation and relegation to the status of a sportsman's paradise or a desert'.⁴⁰²

In some senses the context of the late 1930s contained positive elements for the task of highland development. Although nationalist politics were emerging in partisan form with the formation of the SNP in 1934 they were marginal in electoral form. The late 1930s, however, saw a bolstering of Scottish administration with the Gilmour Report which recommended reorganisation and strengthening of the Scottish Office. This betokened an increase in the status of Scottish affairs in central government. The tangible expression of this, St Andrews House, opened in 1939. There were also negative features and this can be seen in the government response to the Hilleary Committee's Report. The drift towards war in 1939 meant that the detailed consideration of the funding of highland development took place in a very unpromising climate. Much dissatisfaction arose from the announcement in August 1939 of limited funding, amounting to only around £65,000, for the highlands. This had, of course, been the outcome of negotiations with the Treasury in London and the perceived miserliness of their outlook placed the Secretary of Scotland in a difficult position given the expectations generated by the report and

⁴⁰² NRS, DD 15/4, P.J. Blair (Scottish Unionist Party) to Colville, 3 Feb. 1939; James Fraser (Secretary, London Branch of the SNP) to Colville, 17 Dec. 1938. This file also contains representations from other Unionists, the Highland Development League, the Convention of Royal Burghs and the Scottish Land and Property Federation. There are representations from local authorities and other bodies at DD15/5 and /11.

perceived governmental generosity in other areas.⁴⁰³ The disappointment was compounded by the coincidence of an announcement on the same day of funding for the development of Newfoundland worth several million pounds. This led some politicians, and not only nationalists, to argue that Scotland might be better off as a Dominion than as part of the United Kingdom. Bob Boothby the independently-minded Conservative articulated this argument. There were other views, however. The *Inverness Courier* argued that the Commission had wasted two years investigating well-known issues and that its conclusions were rather predictable.⁴⁰⁴

The evidence provided by this debate suggests that the period immediately before the outbreak of the Second World War was a significant one. Historians who have addressed this period have, understandably, argued that the unwillingness of the government to fund the proposals of the Hilleary Commission represented a missed opportunity. Taking a slightly longer view, however, it is possible to say something different. The difficult experience of the region in the 1930s and the reorientation towards the industrial lowlands of the land settlement operation had moved the debate about the condition of the highlands into new areas.⁴⁰⁵ Although few of the issues raised in this debate – exploitation of water resources, how to deal with poverty, diversification of the industrial base of the highlands, emigration – had been resolved, it was strikingly different in tone and content compared to what had gone before. The ‘developmental’ approach to the problems of the region was not new in the inter-war period, as we have seen, but it was

⁴⁰³ See the correspondence between the Scottish Office and the Treasury in NRS, DD15/15, esp. John Colville to John Simon (Chancellor of the Exchequer), 20 Jul. 1939.

⁴⁰⁴ *Inverness Courier*, **date** 1939.

⁴⁰⁵ Alexander S. Mather, ‘The rise and fall of government-assisted land settlement in Scotland’, *Land Use Policy*, 2 (1985), 222–3.

recognised as the one most likely to yield results. This was a common theme in different parts of rural Britain. In Wales, where government intervention in the land question had been less pronounced than in Scotland or Ireland, the debate also turned towards the idea of development and diversification through such exigencies as hydro-electricity. Industrial unemployment was also a major theme in Wales and land settlement was seen as one possible way to deal with that problem.⁴⁰⁶ In Ireland, however, the 'land question' reigned supreme. Although land purchase had been extensive prior to partition, both Cumann na nGaedheal and, in the 1930s, Fianna Fáil governments, especially the latter, stuck to the idea that breaking up estates and creating new small holdings was the correct response to the injustices of rural Ireland. In the Irish case the land question was at the heart of the national movement but there was another contrast: the victims of the economic depression in the industrial region around Belfast were not the problem of the government of the new Free State. Had partition not occurred and had De Valera and Fianna Fail been governing the thirty-two counties, as they wished, it would have been much more difficult to pursue the settlement of the land question in the way that they did in the 1930s. They too might have had to consider the same issues which were current in Scotland and Wales.⁴⁰⁷

*

⁴⁰⁶ Denis Linehan and Pyrs Gruffudd, 'Unruly topographies: unemployment, citizenship and land settlement in inter-war Wales', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 29 (2004), 46–63; Pyrs Gruffudd, 'Back to the land: historiography, rurality and the nation in the interwar Wales', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 19 (1994), 61–77.

⁴⁰⁷ Terence Dooley, *'The Land for the People': The Land Question in Independent Ireland* (Dublin, 2004), 57–131, 201–27; David Seth Jones, 'Land reform legislation and security of tenure in Ireland after independence', *Eire-Ireland*, 32/33 (1997–8), 116–43; Nuala C. Johnson, 'Building a nation: an examination of the Irish Gaeltacht Commission Report of 1926', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 19 (1993), 157–68.

The appointment of Thomas Johnston, with his longstanding interest in the highlands, as Secretary of State for Scotland in 1941 was a highly significant event. Johnston had been present during the debates about the Caledonian Power scheme in the 1930s and the Grampian scheme in the early part of the war and was determined to harness the water resources of the highlands by the state for the widest possible benefit. The debates about the Grampian scheme, which would have involved the flooding of Glen Affric and Glen Cannich in Inverness-shire, in 1940 and 1941 had raised further opposition to private hydro schemes. The Highland Development League summed up their opposition to this scheme in clear terms:

It would be difficult to find anywhere a record of such complete exploitation of the natural resources of one part of a country in the interests, largely fictitious, of another. The Highland Development League submits that the remaining half of Highland water power (which includes the Glen Affric power) should henceforth be strictly conserved until such time as it may be used for the betterment of life and the retention of the native population in the Highlands themselves.⁴⁰⁸

A version of this argument was accepted and articulated by Thomas Johnston in 1942–3 when he sought to harness the water power resources of the highlands by the state in the national interest. Although the Hydro-Board has been celebrated in post-war Scotland as

⁴⁰⁸ *The Highland Development League presents its compliments and submits a Brief Restatement of the Case against the Glen Affric Power Bill, 1941* (Glasgow, 1941). The covering letter to this pamphlet, which alleged irregularities in the process by which private legislation was sought for this scheme, induced Sir Dennis Herbert to allege that Murchison and Grant were in contempt of the House of Commons. The case was not pursued; see TNA, LO3/1247, which includes extensive material from the HDL and about the Grampian Scheme in general.

the means by which electricity was supplied to domestic consumers, thereby improving the lives of much of the highland population, this was only part of Johnston's vision. His principal aim was to provide a source of cheap electricity which would attract industry to the region and stimulate the economy. This part of his plan did not come to fruition on the scale he envisaged. In an indication of the extent to which wartime conditions had changed the terms of the debate there was much less opposition to his plans from the landscape lobby than there had been to the hydro schemes of the inter-war period. A major reason for this was that attention to landscape arguments was built into the legislation in the shape of an 'Amenity Committee' which was to be independent of the Board and have oversight of and powers of alteration over the Board's construction plans on matters of design and landscaping.⁴⁰⁹ In time the Board's architecture became very highly regarded, not least as a result of very clever marketing of the schemes as 'Cathedrals in the Glens and through use of sympathetic materials and designs.'⁴¹⁰ The much-vaunted 'Council of State' established by Johnston and composed of his predecessors as Secretary, and Secretary of State, for Scotland, also paid considerable and early attention to the highlands.⁴¹¹ The narrative of the establishment of the Cooper Committee in 1942 and the creation of the NSHEB the following year is important and well known. There were other important developments during the War, however. The war did much to increase the isolation of the region in the view of its advocates.⁴¹² The designation of the protected area meant that travel restrictions were intense and tourism

⁴⁰⁹ John Sheail, 'The "amenity" clause: an insight into half a century of environmental protection in the United Kingdom', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 17 (1992), 152–65, at 152–4.

⁴¹⁰ K. J. Lea, 'Hydro-electric power developments and the landscape in the highlands of Scotland', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 84 (1968), 239–47.

⁴¹¹ R.H. Campbell, 'The committee of ex-Secretaries of State and industrial policy', *Scottish Industrial History*, 2 (1979), 1–10.

⁴¹² John M. Bannerman, 'Post-war development of the highlands and islands', *Proceedings of the Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow*, 69 (1944–5), 66.

and commercial sport largely ceased. The needs of wartime food production meant that an extensive form of land use for pleasure, such as shooting, was frowned upon and pressure was applied by Agricultural Executive Committees to turn such land over to grazing. In addition, other areas were closed due to the use of the landscape for military training. This presented a range of problems in sustaining the policy of economic development. This also affected the self interest of the landowning community who saw many of their sources of income curtailed, a point which they made in a memorial to the Scottish Office in the early part of the war.⁴¹³

The perspective of the government was that war-related work on the construction of airfields, harbours and roads amounted to a greater level of investment than had been envisaged under the government's response to the Hilleary report in 1939. These projects were conceived with the military needs of the war effort, rather than the long-term development of the region in mind. The investment in hydro-electricity was relevant to longer-term regional development as were lower key but also valuable reforms such as the Herring Industry Act of 1944 and even the Rural Water Supplies and Sewerage Act of the same year.⁴¹⁴

.

⁴¹³ NRS, SEP12/86, Memo for John Colville, 'The Highlands and the War', 19 Apr. 1940. This was signed by a range of local government leaders in the highlands as well as Flora MacLeod of MacLeod, a member of the Hilleary Committee, Alexander MacEwen and Lachlan Grant.

⁴¹⁴ NRS, DD20/1, Inter-departmental Committee on Highland Development – Development in the Highlands and Islands, Notes for the Secretary of State for Scotland, 1945.

The election of a Labour government in 1945 saw a concerted attempt to extend the policy of economic planning throughout the United Kingdom. To an extent the new government was building on initiatives of the inter-war period but there were new approaches. The *Distribution of Industry Act* was an attempt to bring industry, employment and prosperity to areas of high unemployment by offering incentives and inducements to companies to set up in such areas. It was an extension of the Special Areas legislation of the 1930s, deemed to have been inadequate. Development Areas were identified, they were wider than the Special Areas and included a swathe of West Central Scotland, the district around Dundee and, after 1948, an area around Dingwall and Inverness which was chosen for its economic potential as much as for the seriousness of its unemployment.⁴¹⁵ Although this was welcomed, there were some who regarded this form of regional policy as inappropriate for the Highlands. The Scottish Council of Industry and a number of members of the Scottish Office's new Advisory Panel on the Highlands feared that industrial concentration in the Development Areas would drain the western Highlands of population.⁴¹⁶ This line of argument suggested that government policy should concentrate on the traditional industries of the area, like agriculture and fishing, or industries based on readily available natural resources, like forestry.

Outside the favoured localities of the eastern Highlands, the worry was about the collapse of community and social life. A letter of 1947 from the Secretary of the Raasay Local

⁴¹⁵ Gavin McCrone, *Regional Policy in Britain* (London, 1969), 109.

⁴¹⁶ NRS, SEP12/94, Scottish Council of Industry, Highland Problems: Summarised Investigation Progress Report, no date (c. 1945); SEP12/2, Advisory Panel on the Highlands and Islands, Minutes of 11th Meeting, 11 Jun. 1948; Minutes of 15th Meeting, 5 Nov. 1948.

Development Committee indicates how the population of the island felt remote from the landowner:

We have been consistently bypassed by every authority responsible for the development of the Highlands and life on the island has come dangerously near to the point of extinction.⁴¹⁷

In considering this specific example it should be noted that the landowner was the government, which had purchased the island in 1922 after a land raid which saw cottars from the island of Rona stake a claim to land on Raasay. Indeed, it was this sense of neglect by central and local authorities which induced Calum Macleod, who lived in the north end of the island to begin, and ultimately complete the construction of the road between Brochel and Arnish upon which he worked single-handedly between 1964 and 1979.⁴¹⁸

The principal drive of the post-war Labour government was to encourage industry to the Development Areas. This policy was conducted through the Board of Trade and the Development Areas Treasury Advisory Committee [DATAC], which had very strict rules about the potential profitability of any business to be supported, the exhaustion of other sources of funding, and the amount of data required of applicants. There were countervailing pressures, however; the lack of resources for capital investment meant that new construction projects had to be considered on their potential for contributing to the

⁴¹⁷ NRS, SEP12/7/1, Letter from the Secretary of the Raasay Local Development Committee, c.1947.

⁴¹⁸ Roger Hutchison, *Calum's Road* (Edinburgh, 2006).

national priority for export generation and import saving.⁴¹⁹ This policy, whatever its success in other areas, was an almost total failure in the northern Development Areas.⁴²⁰ The policy is not, therefore, significant for its results, but reveals elements of official thinking about the Highlands which once again were characterised by the application of a nationwide policy to this particular region and was justified by vivid language. Civil servants in London did not share in the romantic view. They felt that the extension to selected areas of the Highlands of the Distribution of Industry Act was not justified. The view of the Board of Trade, on whose conscience the problems of the Highlands did not weigh heavily, argued that the policy was ‘designed to relieve the worst cases of high unemployment ... it is not designed to affect changes in population’.⁴²¹ The Minister concerned, Stafford Cripps, argued that urban unemployment was a ‘greater evil, particularly from a social aspect’ than rural unemployment.⁴²² In 1948 the Scottish Office returned to the theme that the Highlands were special and neglected in a further effort to have the region scheduled as a development area.

The whole area has suffered for generations from economic hardship, inadequate social services and constant depopulation, to a degree not paralleled elsewhere;

⁴¹⁹ NRS, SEP/12/7/2, Advisory Panel on the Highlands, Highland Development, 29 Oct 1948.

⁴²⁰ George C. Peden, *The Treasury and British Public Policy, 1906–1959* (Oxford, 2000) 418; S N Broadberry and N F R Crafts, ‘British economic policy and industrial performance in the early post-war period’, *Business History* 38 (1996) 65–91; P. Scott, ‘British regional policy, 1945–51: a lost opportunity’, *Twentieth Century British History* 8 (1997) 358–82; S. Rosevear, ‘Balancing business and the regions: British distribution of industry policy and the Board of Trade, 1945–51’, *Business History* 40 (1998) 77–99.

⁴²¹ TNA: PRO, BT106/45/25, Jay to Anderson, 19 Jun. 1945.

⁴²² TNA: PRO, BT106/45/45 and /49, Tom Fraser to Cripps, 13 Nov. 1945; Cripps to Fraser, 27 Nov. 1945.

and it is accepted by all parties as a primary obligation of the government to restore to the highlands a measure of prosperity.⁴²³

A Scottish Home Department Civil Servant argued that distribution policy should be applied to the Highlands not only because of unemployment, but also as a response to emigration and depopulation, criteria which were not applied to any other part of Scotland.

Since it would be impossible to contemplate with equanimity the progressive depopulation of some 50 per cent of the entire area of Scotland and social and other consequences of the virtual extinction of an eminently vigorous racial stock, every effort will require to be made to provide an economic means of livelihood for the local inhabitants of the highlands areas.⁴²⁴

The post-war period also saw other forms of thinking about the highlands which did not emphasise economic development to the same extent. Indeed, the increasing awareness of the problems of the highlands in environmental terms ran counter to economic planning and development. Although this approach to the highlands was not new and did not have a significant impact on government until quite late in our period, it cannot be ignored. In the post-war period there was a growing sense that the region was not 'wild' or 'unspoiled' or 'wilderness', as some had alleged in the debates over hydro-electricity in

⁴²³ TNA: PRO, BT177/192/2, R. E. C. Johnson (Scottish Home Department) to C. F. Monier Williams (Board of Trade), 9 Jun. 1948.

⁴²⁴ TNA: PRO, BT106/45/11, Legislation on balanced distribution of industry, application to selected areas in the highlands (Note by Scottish Home Department).

the 1930s, but affected in the most profound way by generations of human activity. The key figure in advancing this line of thought was the naturalist Frank Fraser Darling. His striking description of the highlands as a ‘devastated countryside’ affected by the depredations of man and introduced animals, especially deer and sheep, represented an important step forward in thinking about the region.⁴²⁵ Although some of his conclusions about deforestation or the harmful effects of sheep grazing have not stood the test of time, his work is important in understanding the way we now think about the highland landscape.

Fraser Darling was commissioned in 1944 by the Development Commission and the Department of Agriculture to undertake the West Highland Survey. When he eventually delivered his results they were regarded as hopelessly idealistic and politically unrealistic. The fact that they were ignored by government owes as much to their author’s personal awkwardness and lack of political awareness as to the unimaginative approach of the bureaucrats of St Andrews House, although the latter should not be underestimated.⁴²⁶ Fraser Darling’s attempt to think of the highland landscape in terms of ‘human ecology’ and to argue that the solution to the environmental degradation of the region was a century-long process of environmental rebalancing through conservation. Fraser Darling idealised crofting, a notion which he had imbibed during his periods of living in Wester Ross and on various islands in the 1930s and 1940s while carrying out his work on Red

⁴²⁵ Frank Fraser Darling, *West Highland Survey: An Essay in Human Ecology* (London, 1955), 192.

⁴²⁶ Margaretta S. Brokaw, ‘Solving the highland problem: Frank Fraser Darling and the West Highland Survey, 1943–1955’, unpublished M.Phil thesis, University of St Andrews, 2003, 42, 73, 99; John Morton Boyd, *Fraser Darling’s Islands* (Edinburgh, 1986), 190–215.

Deer, Grey Seals and seabirds.⁴²⁷ Nevertheless, he was not confident that the crofters of the highlands could work to restore their environment without significant outside direction. For all his originality in an ecological sense he was yet another voice in the growing chorus which called for an institution, which he called an ‘executive commission’, to direct highland affairs. He was critical of existing organisations such as the NSHEB, the Forestry Commission and the Department of Agriculture for Scotland, because they had responsibilities beyond the highlands and they lacked a ‘socio-ecological attitude of mind’.⁴²⁸ He was inspired, like Grant and Murchison in the 1930s but for different reasons, by the Tennessee Valley Authority. He concluded:

Effective rehabilitation will call for an organisation with executive authority, able to act in several fields and which will not neglect the scientific quality and interest of what is being done, nor omit the humane studies which could be the lubrication of the whole intricate machinery. Highland feeling is bitter and the method of procrastination practised by successive governments, of appointing committees of investigation and for giving advice without obtaining the basic data, has worn thin.⁴²⁹

Above all, Fraser Darling wanted a body which would take action to reduce sheep numbers, manage dangerous practices such as muirburn, reverse deforestation and oversee what we would now call ‘sustainable’ agriculture. The mid-1950s were not the

⁴²⁷ Fraser Darling, *West Highland Survey*, Frank Fraser Darling, *Island Years* (London, 1940); Frank Fraser Darling, *Island Farm* (London, 1943); Frank Fraser Darling, *Crofting Agriculture* (Edinburgh, 1945).

⁴²⁸ Fraser Darling, *West Highland Survey*, 360.

⁴²⁹ Fraser Darling, *West Highland Survey*, 362.

right time for such an approach. The schemes of the Hydro Board were at the peak of their construction phase and necessitated a view that the landscape was for exploitation in the national interest. Further, agriculture, even the hill sheep-farming largely practised in the highlands, was in receipt of financial support from the government and farming interests were not amenable to the reduction in stock numbers which lay at the heart of Fraser Darling's plan for landscape conservation.⁴³⁰ As a result the *West Highland Survey* languished on the Scottish Office shelf, although both document and author gained prominence in the United States.⁴³¹ Despite Fraser Darling's increasingly evident scientific shortcomings, his overall conclusion that the highland landscape had been scarred by human intervention, especially since the eighteenth century, was very important in the debate on its rehabilitation. By the time he delivered his Reith lectures in 1969, later published as *Wilderness and Plenty*, his view that ways had to be found for humans to live in the landscape without destroying the flora and fauna around them was part of the orthodoxy, although there was little clarity about how to achieve it.⁴³²

*

One reason for the lack of a positive response to Fraser Darling was that the government became focused on the idea of economic development. In many accounts the narrative is

⁴³⁰ Ewen A. Cameron, 'The Modernisation of Scottish Agriculture' in T.M. Devine, G. C. Peden and C. H. Lee (eds), *The Transformation of Scotland: The Economy since 1700* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 198–200.

⁴³¹ Morton Boyd, *Fraser Darling's Islands*, 208–11.

⁴³² T.C. Smout, 'The highlands and the roots of green consciousness, 1750–1990', in T. C. Smout, *Exploring Environmental History: Selected Essays* (Edinburgh, 2009), 39–41; see Frank Fraser Darling, 'Ecology of land use in the highlands and islands', in Derick S. Thomson and Ian Grimble (eds), *The Future of the Highlands* (London, 1968), 29–55, for a later statement of Fraser Darling's views on the highlands; for his more general thesis see Frank Fraser Darling, *Wilderness and Plenty* (London, 1970) where despite his lingering Malthusianism he accepted population increase as an inevitability but felt that there was still time to do something about conservation and pollution reduction.

centred piece on the creation of the Highlands and Islands Development Board in 1965. Other key events which pre-dated this important initiative included the establishment of the Experimental Reactor and Fast Breeder Reactor at Dounreay in Caithness and the development of a pulp and paper mill at Corpach near Fort William. These projects were followed by a new Aluminium smelter project at Invergordon in Easter Ross. These projects shared the objective of stimulating employment and economic activity.⁴³³ Each of them made sense in its own terms. The Fort William pulp and paper mill, promoted by the paper industry in combination with the Conservative government in the early 1960s, sought to take advantage of the resources of the forestry industry in highland Scotland, struggling to dispose of timber in light of the reduction of the market for pip props.⁴³⁴ Indeed, it was argued that without the pulp mill the outlook for the Forestry Commission's activities in Scotland were bleak. The pulp-mill project had another advantage in that it provided extra traffic to the West Highland railway line, which passed very close to the plant.⁴³⁵

The aluminium smelter established in Invergordon in the late 1960s had wider trade objectives, especially the reduction of reliance on imported aluminium and the protection of the domestic industry. Although there was a tradition of aluminium production in the highlands this new plant was different in that it drew its power not from local hydro schemes but from lowland sources generated, ultimately, by the new nuclear power station at Hunterston in Ayrshire. Each project also contained fundamental flaws. In the

⁴³³ Niall G. MacKenzie, ““Chuckin’ buns across the fence”: governmental planning and regeneration projects in the Scottish highland economy, 1945–82”, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2008

⁴³⁴ Ian Levitt, ‘Regenerating the Scottish highlands: Whitehall and the Fort William pulp mill’, *JSHS*, 25 (2005), 21–39.

⁴³⁵ TNA, T224/462, Scottish Pulp Mill: Social Considerations, Memorandum by the Scottish Office.

case of Invergordon the cost of electricity destroyed the finances of the smelter in the early 1980s.⁴³⁶ The pulp mill at Fort William never operated at full capacity and was not profitable. The method adopted for the processing of pulp proved to be inefficient and, like smelter at Invergordon, the pulp mill closed in the early 1980s. An additional factor in the termination of these projects was the unwillingness of the Conservative government elected in 1979 to continue subsidising unprofitable manufacturing plants. This approach, terminal for lowland car factories as well as these experiments in highland industrialisation, formed part of a narrative of this government's policies' harmful effect on Scottish manufacturing. Their failure was an equally important part of that government's narrative that centralised planning of the economy for quasi-political purposes was not as beneficial as the unhindered operation of the free market. The decision to close the aluminium smelter in Invergordon resulted in the loss of the one of the Conservative party's last seats in the highlands as a young postgraduate student from Fort William called Charles Kennedy, defeated Hamish Gray in Ross, Cromarty and Skye at the 1983 general election. It also brought to an end this phase of attempting to develop the highland economy.

These projects had been expensive failures and, far from stimulating economic activity, they created harmful dependency and high rates of unemployment, a problem which had not formerly existed in Fort William, Thurso or Invergordon. These projects were also designed to try to counter population drift away from the highlands but this also contributed to the legacy of unemployment which they left behind. The fact was that

⁴³⁶ Mark Shucksmith and Graeme Lloyd, 'The HIDB, regional policy and the Invergordon closure', *National Westminster Bank Quarterly Review* (May, 1982), 14–25; David Simpson, 'The lessons of Invergordon', *Quarterly Economic Commentary, Fraser of Allender Institute*, 7 (1982), 25–6.

there was insufficient labour to meet their demands and workers had to be brought in and housed. In none of these cases was sufficient given to the practicalities of bringing significant new population to towns, such as Fort William or Thurso, which lacked complex infrastructure.⁴³⁷ Since few other industries had grown in the shadow of the pulp mill, smelter or nuclear reactors their closures were disasters for the places into which they had been parachuted.

These high-prestige, large-scale projects can also be seen as part of an intra-governmental process whereby Secretaries of State for Scotland, both Labour and Conservative, were successful in securing resources from the Treasury in London for projects north of the border. At an interdepartmental meeting in 1962 a leading Scottish Office Civil Servant argued that the Board of Trade ought to put up a very large sum of money for the pulp mill, not only because the project was seen as essential to the highlands but also because ‘there was a sentimental feeling for the highlands that meant that public opinion was prepared to see that area of Scotland treated specially’.⁴³⁸ Despite misgivings, the Treasury and the Board of Trade sanctioned an unusually high level of funding for the project. This might be seen as further evidence that highland Scotland, absorbing 10 per cent of government expenditure in Scotland by the early 1980s, was seen as a special case. In an age when territorial politics were becoming more important Scotland had to receive obvious attention from the Westminster government. This approach to economic development of the highlands appears archaic and ill-thought-out from the current vantage point but it is important to realise that both the policy and the individual projects

⁴³⁷ A worry expressed by the *Economist*, 17 Sep. 1966.

⁴³⁸ TNA, T224/462, Meeting at Board of Trade, 22 Nov. 1962.

were at the cutting edge of modernity in the early to mid-1960s. In the case of the Fort William pulp and paper mill Wiggins Teape produced a glossy brochure to emphasise the way in which the ‘greatest industrial enterprise undertaken in the highlands since the last war’ was ‘pioneering’ and would ‘dam the steady wastage of manpower’ for the ‘nation’s good.’⁴³⁹

The Great Glen, Easter Ross and Caithness were identified as a potential ‘growth point’ for the development of the region. By the late 1950s and early 1960s this was the dominant mode of thinking in the field of regional policy. Rather than concentrating efforts on ‘declining areas’ with high unemployment there was an attempt to identify potential. Critics, and there were many as this policy was applied to the highlands, argued that it would have a negative effect as economic activity and population was sucked away from outlying rural areas towards ‘growth points’. In retrospect, the idea of concentration of growth at particular points was unlikely to be successful in a region like the highlands with low levels of urban density and relatively poor infrastructure. This reflected a more general confusion in the way the idea was drawn from the academic literature and applied in a range of situations.⁴⁴⁰ The Highland Panel had been impressed by the adoption of different kinds of ‘growth points’ that they had seen in Norway during their visit in 1962.

⁴³⁹ TNA, BT258/856, contains a copy of *Scottish Pulp: The Story of a Highland Enterprise*.

⁴⁴⁰ John B. Parr, ‘Growth-pole strategies in regional economic planning: a retrospective view. Part 1: origins and advocacy’, *Urban Studies*, 36 (1999), 1195–1215; John B. Parr, ‘Growth-pole strategies in regional economic planning: a retrospective view. Part 2: implementation and outcome’, *Urban Studies*, 36 (1999), 1247–68; John S. Smith, ‘The Invergordon aluminium smelter: growth policy gone wrong? A note’, *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 98 (1982), 115–18; J.T. Hughes, ‘HIDB development policy: a response’, *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 99 (1983), 121–4.

Their advice, that a series of ‘growth points’ – ranging from large-scale industrial centres to rural holding areas – be established in the highlands, was ignored.⁴⁴¹

The Labour government, which passed the Highland Development Bill after coming to power in 1964 after thirteen years of opposition, emphasised the novelty of its proposals and the extent to which it would be able to tackle the land question as well as improve the economy of the region. As we have seen, there was a long history of advocacy of an agency to stimulate the highlands. This went back to the 1930s and can even, although tendentiously, be pushed back into earlier contexts by noting the Congested Districts Board and even the Annexed Estates Board of the late eighteenth century.⁴⁴² Despite claiming originality it is interesting that, like the Highland Development League of the 1930s, Labour politicians of the 1960s appealed to the legacy of the Tennessee Valley Authority in their references to the HIDB.⁴⁴³ Less often acknowledged is that Labour was able to legislate quickly in 1965 by building on foundations laid by the preceding Conservative government, which had considered creating a ‘Highland Board’ in the early 1960s.⁴⁴⁴ Despite the new Board’s seemingly sweeping powers critics argued that they were insufficient to deal with the scale of the problems and that the board lacked teeth on

⁴⁴¹ NRS, SEP12/194, Note by the Scottish Development Department, Growth Points in Norway, 18 Nov. 1963.

⁴⁴² Ian Levitt, ‘The creation of the Highlands and Islands Development Board’, 1935–65’, *Northern Scotland*, 19 (1999), 85–106.

⁴⁴³ Harold Wilson, *The Labour Government, 1964–70: A Personal Record* (London, 1971), 684.

⁴⁴⁴ Clive M. Birnie, ‘The Scottish Office and the highland problem, 1930 to 1965’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2008, 124–50; for the wider context of Conservative policy in this period see, Jim Tomlinson, ‘Conservative modernisation, 1960–64: too little, too late?’, *Contemporary British History*, 11 (1997), 18–38.

the land question. The latter criticism certainly turned out to be well founded.⁴⁴⁵ The HIDB was a classic example of the confident belief of central government in this period that top-down and institutional approaches to regional development were likely to lead to the best results. Nevertheless, there was a move from attempting to focus attention on areas of high unemployment and economic dereliction to a more positive strategy for reform of the structure of regional economies. The motivations behind the shift were a mixture of base electoral calculation and politicians' relatively shallow interest and understanding of ideas in regional economics.⁴⁴⁶ The Highland Board is a good example of the way in which these ideas were sensitive to unpredictable events, such as the development of oil-related industries in the highlands.

There were, however, attempts to try to build a new and different type of economy in the highlands from the bottom up. The most important example of this approach was the creation and operation of the Highland Fund. This body gave low-interest unsecured loans to crofters and others for small-scale developments. The fund had its origins in the relationship between Lord Malcolm Douglas Hamilton, MP for Inverness-shire from 1950 to 1954, and an emigrant Scottish businessman, Herbert Ross. The Fund attracted only suspicion from government in its early years, mostly as a consequence of Lord Malcolm's eccentric approach to fundraising in the US. With an injection of £50,000 from Ross, however, it soon became self-financing and, with a very low rate of bad debt,

⁴⁴⁵ McRorie, *Highland Cause*, 194–8; Ian Carter, 'Six years on: an evaluative study of the HIDB', *Aberdeen University Review*, 45 (1973–4), 55–78; Ian Carter, 'The highlands of Scotland as an underdeveloped region', in E. de Kadt and G. Williams (eds), *Sociology and Development* (London, 1974), 279–311.

⁴⁴⁶ Glen O' Hara, 'A journey without maps: the regional policies of the British Labour government of 1964–70', *Regional Studies*, 39 (2005) 1183–95.

a modest but significant agency in small-scale development in the Highlands.⁴⁴⁷ By the late 1950s it was viewed more positively and worked with government in the early 1960s to distribute grants to enterprising highlanders through the 'Treasury Loans Scheme'.⁴⁴⁸ The capital of £150,000 which circulated through this scheme was welcome and provided useful support for the fishing industry and other local enterprises. The problem, however, was that funding at such levels was deemed to be insufficient and setting aside later criticisms of 'top-down approaches', there was widespread recognition that only the government or large-scale enterprises such as the British Aluminium Company, had the capacity to make a difference to the economic condition of the highlands. John Rollo, the engineer-businessman who was also at the heart of the Highland Fund, had attempted to show what small-scale business initiative could do with a series of factories in the highlands, including one at Inversadale in Wester Ross which produced his 'Croftmaster' tractor. For all his advocacy of this approach and the role of the private sector, Rollo sought further government action and was appointed Deputy Chairman of the HIDB in 1965.⁴⁴⁹ Thomas Murchison, who had been campaigning on these issues since the 1930s recognised this point when he argued that large-scale government investment was required.⁴⁵⁰

Given the bipartisan emphasis that urban development was a vital component of economic development, it is not surprising that thought was given to establishing a new town in the eastern highlands to complement those in central Scotland. This was thought

⁴⁴⁷ James Hunter, *The Highland Fund, 1953–1991* (Glasgow, 1992); Birnie, 'Scottish Office and the highlands', 62–77, 91–6; McRorie, *Highland Cause*,

⁴⁴⁸ Birnie, 'Scottish Office and the highlands', 139–51.

⁴⁴⁹ Birnie, 'Scottish Office and the highlands', 53–61, 77–83, 86–91, 218–26, 237–8.

⁴⁵⁰ *Glasgow Herald*, 18 Oct. 1963, 7; Birnie, 'Scottish Office and the highlands', 146.

likely to address the objectives of population retention and economic diversification which lay at the heart of government thinking about the highlands in this period, especially after the 1955 reform of the crofting system. Indeed, even the later attempts to reform the crofting system in the 1960s were underlain with an attempt to release the its perceived economic potential. This pattern of economic and urban development was seen as self-consciously modern.

*

Another attempt by local interests in the highlands to take advantage of wider developments was the attempt to have Scotland's sixth university placed in Inverness. The Robbins Report on Higher Education, published in 1961, recommended an expansion of the university sector in the UK and suggested that at least one new institutions be located in Scotland.⁴⁵¹ The University Grants Committee, a central government body which oversaw allocations of funds to the universities, established a committee under Sir John Wolfenden to investigate the claims of the various places in Scotland, from Dumfries in the South to Inverness in the north, bidding for the new university. There had been a long-standing suggestion that a university should be located in Inverness and there was a degree of concerted, although fruitless, activity in 1947 when highland local authorities began a campaign.⁴⁵² The appointment of the Wolfenden

⁴⁵¹ *Report of the Committee on Higher Education*, [hereafter *Higher Education*] 1963, Cmnd. 2154; D. King and V. Nash, 'Continuity of Ideas and the Politics of Higher Education Expansion in Britain from Robbins to Dearing', *Twentieth Century British History*, 12 (2001), 191–7.

⁴⁵² Highland Archive, R33, Campaign for a Fifth University in Scotland, Conference re Proposed University, 10 July 1947; *Inverness Courier*, 25 April, 9 May, 10 June, 11 July 1947; *Highland News*, 7 June 1947.

group, however, gave impetus to a campaign which had stalled.⁴⁵³ This proposal initiated a debate which sheds much light on different views on the place of the highlands in the UK as well as varying approaches to the development of the region.

Perhaps encouraged by the Scottish Office, the Inverness and Dumfries campaigns stressed the regional development, as well as educational, dimensions of the case. This was a strategic error. During the visit to Inverness Wolfenden made clear that he and his colleagues were more interested in what Inverness could contribute as the site of a university than what a university would bring the development of the town and the highlands more generally.⁴⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the principal appeal made to the UGC was on economic grounds:

There is an economic argument in favour of the establishment of a university in the Highlands which is, that if the Government is serious in wishing to further the economic and industrial development of the North, which has a population of a quarter of a million, there is no better way of achieving this aim than to establish ... a university in Inverness. Such a development would help to create not only a much-needed feeling of confidence and independence, but it would bring in its wake industrial expansion.

⁴⁵³ NRS, DD12/913, Royal Burgh of Inverness, Town and Country Planning Act, 1947, Development Plan, Survey Report, 3 Feb. 1952; TNA, UGC7/237, Memorandum by Provost Robert Wotherspoon, Inverness for submission to Sir Keith Murray, Chairman of the University Grants Committee in connection with the proposed erection of a fifth University in Scotland, 28 December 1960.

⁴⁵⁴ NRS, SEP12/166, Siting of Universities: Proposed advice from Scottish Departments, Outline of Headings of Advice to be Submitted to the University Grants Committee, Scottish Development Group, Feb. 1964; SEP12/196, Advisory Panel on the Highlands Meeting 29 May 1964, Note for Chairman of Development Group; *Inverness Courier*, 15 May 1964.

It was proposed that the University be built on 200 acres of farmland on the edge of the town adjacent to Raigmore Hospital; the Cameron Barracks, a short distance away – ‘now surplus to requirements’ – could be adapted to accommodate 500 students and staff. In academic terms it was noted that Inverness was

an ideal centre for pursuit of the natural sciences because of its situation in an area, unique in Britain, for its opportunities in providing the best field of study of biology, zoology, botany, geography, geology and forestry. It is also a suitable centre for the study of Celtic language and literature.⁴⁵⁵

Although there were other smaller factors – the mishandling of the visit of the Wolfenden Group – this emphasis contributed significantly to the underwhelming impression made by the Inverness campaign. At the conclusion of the process it was decided that the new University be sited at Bridge of Allan, just outside Stirling. This was an outcome for which the Inverness promoters were unprepared. Provost Wotherspoon complained to Wolfenden that an official body on a brief visit from the South could not hope to acquire an understanding of a region as vast as the Scottish highlands.⁴⁵⁶ Although there was a whiff of sour grapes about this argument, his observation has some substance. The main factor which seemed to count against Inverness was that of its geographical position.⁴⁵⁷ Of all the claimants, Inverness had the smallest population within a thirty mile radius:

⁴⁵⁵ NAS, SEP12/194, Copy of a letter from Robert Wotherspoon, Chairman, and Mr James Cameron, Clerk, North of Scotland Sponsoring Committee, 23 Jan. 1964; see also TNA, UGC7/241, Supplementary memorandum by the North of Scotland Sponsoring Committee to the UGC in connection with proposed erection of a new university in Scotland, 27 Dec. 1963.

⁴⁵⁶ TNA, UGC7/244, Robert Wotherspoon to Wolfenden, 14 Aug. 1964.

⁴⁵⁷ TNA, UGC7/240, Report from Sub-Committee on New Universities, 18 Jun 1964.

105,000 compared to 2.8m for Stirling, the latter figure was higher than any of the existing Universities.⁴⁵⁸ One member of the Sub-Committee was quite explicit about this, telling Wolfenden, 'I think we should rule out both Dumfries and Inverness as too inaccessible...'. She went on to assert that 'Inverness is so remote that it could not fail to be under some handicap, and there would be altogether too much Highland regionalism about it'.⁴⁵⁹ This problem was compounded by the fact that there were significant voices in Inverness who argued against the University project. Principal among these was the editor of the *Inverness Courier*, Evan Barron. He was openly contemptuous of the notion of Inverness as a seat of higher learning. He voiced this opinion forcibly in a series of very strident editorials and also took the trouble to write to Wolfenden pointing out his objections.⁴⁶⁰ He argued that a highland university with 'highland students' would

ensure a breed of narrow-minded, parochial graduates who would be of little good to the Highlands; to their fellow Highlanders, especially to any of the younger generation whom they came to instruct; to themselves; or to the University.⁴⁶¹

This defeat contributed to a certain degree of pessimism in the highlands. The Conservative government, in power since 1951, seemed to have done little to address the needs of the region. The Beeching Report had recommended the closure of the highland railway lines but the pulp mill would not open until 1966 and Dounreay would not get its

⁴⁵⁸ TNA, UGC7/244, Proposed new University locations, maps produced by the Scottish Development Department, April 1964.

⁴⁵⁹ TNA, UGC7/242, L.S. Sutherland, Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, to Wolfenden, 27 May 1964.

⁴⁶⁰ TNA, UGC7/239, Evan M. Barron to John Wolfenden, 13 May 1964.

⁴⁶¹ *Inverness Courier*, 12 May 1964; neither was the other main Inverness newspaper very supportive, see *Northern Chronicle*, 3 Apr., 30 Oct. 1963.

second reactor until 196? This atmosphere contributed to the shifts in highland politics which can be seen at the general elections of 1964 and 1966 when the Conservatives lost most of their seats to the Liberals and, in the case of Caithness and Sutherland, Labour. There was no doubt that, even accounting for the deficiencies of the campaign this was a very considerable missed opportunity. The 1960s were a period of massive expansion in the University sector and the state was more generous than it had ever been, or would be, towards higher education. Although this generosity was tempered severely in the 1980s and the newer universities, including Stirling, endured great difficulties, they have all survived and now have deep roots. The idea of university for the north of Scotland endured, however, and the campaign was kept going, if fitfully, in the 1970s. It was brought to an end by active discouragement from the UGC, whose horizons were shorter in the 1970s than they had been a decade earlier.⁴⁶²

The expansion of Higher Education in the early 1990s and the abolition of the distinction between the central institutions and the universities provided a new context for the project. There was, in fact, little continuity with the earlier period as the new campaign focused on the idea of a multi-campus University of the Highlands and Islands, building on the further education institutions scattered around the region. The support of Highland Regional Council and its single tier successor, Highland Council, through convener Peter Peacock (later an MSP) and Cllr Val MacIver, was crucial as the idea of a Highland

⁴⁶² Highland Archive, C262, Notes of Proceedings at Meeting in Inverness on 11 Dec 1970 – New Univ Campaign; L.R. Fletcher (UGC) to Cllr MacLeod, 25 Feb. 1972.

university began to revive.⁴⁶³ This was, determinedly, not to be a ‘University of Inverness’. There was some experience of ‘Higher Education’ taught through the medium of Gaelic at Sabhal Mor Ostaig, established in 1972 on the Sleat peninsula of Skye. New technology would provide opportunities for teaching to be delivered to students in remote locations in the highlands or, indeed, further afield. This project received a major boost from the Conservative government when Michael Forsyth, Secretary of State for Scotland, agreed to fund the project through the new Scottish Higher Education Funding Council. In 1996 £36m of additional funding came from the Millennium Commission and Highlands and Islands Enterprise was also a significant funder, to the tune of over £40m.⁴⁶⁴ Throughout this developmental period the economic development arguments have been articulated by proponents and defenders of UHI.⁴⁶⁵ Propagandists in favor of the project advanced the argument that a new university in the highlands would be different, more radical than the conservative institutions in the lowlands and that its infrastructure, heavily reliant on ICT, would be less capital intensive than those which had invested in mere bricks and mortar.⁴⁶⁶ There were some voices, somewhat isolated, who expressed skepticism. It is interesting that they used much the same language as Barron in the 1960s. The economist Tony MacKay was one critic. It was his view that

⁴⁶³ Val MacIver, ‘The case for a university in the highlands and islands’, in *A University for the Highlands and Islands Prospects and Possibilities* (Barail, Centre for Highlands and Islands Policy Studies, June 1992), 8–13; *Herald*, 19 Jun. 1992, 2; 16 Jul. 1993, 15.

⁴⁶⁴ *Herald*, 7 Nov. 1996, 10.

⁴⁶⁵ Sir Robert Cowan, ‘A highlands and islands university’, in *A University for the Highlands and Islands Prospects and Possibilities* (Barail, Centre for Highlands and Islands Policy Studies, June 1992), 13–18; David Newlands and Margaret Parker, ‘The prospects and potential of a new university in the highlands and islands’, *Scottish Affairs*, no. 21 (Autumn 1997), 78–94.

⁴⁶⁶ Brian S. Duffield and Graham Hills, *Community Development and Higher Education: A Case Study of the University of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Inverness and Brussels, 1998).

The best and brightest children from the area will continue to go to Aberdeen, Glasgow and other universities where they will be assured of high quality teaching and research in an environment which will suit them socially and educationally ... of course there will always be a few people who will prefer the likes of Stornoway or Scalloway, but we suspect that the numbers of students choosing the University of the Highlands and Islands will be much smaller than predicted and that consequently the UHI will soon run into serious financial problems.⁴⁶⁷

While Mackay was right to note that funding followed student numbers there was a greater diversity of the student body and there was considerable potential for UHI to recruit students from a pool wider than the cohort of school-leavers. By the time the institution received University status in 2011 it had acquired extensive experience of delivering programmes, some of them highly innovative, and developing the technology of remote delivery.⁴⁶⁸ The model of grafting a University onto a network of FE colleges has not been entirely straightforward and UHI has been criticized for being rather top heavy in its administrative structures.⁴⁶⁹ Nevertheless, it has brought considerable employment to a range of locations in the highlands and has provided educational opportunities to people who might not have been able to take advantage of the offerings of a 'traditional' campus university beyond the highlands.

Tourism

⁴⁶⁷ *Herald*, 7 Nov. 1996, 10.

⁴⁶⁸ *Herald*, 22 Dec. 2010, 4.

⁴⁶⁹ *Herald*, 25 Apr. 2012, 10.

In September 1929 Thomas Johnston sent to Ramsay Macdonald a paper on ‘The Development of Scotland as a Health Centre and Tourist Resort’. He knew that this was a subject close to the Prime Minister’s heart and that he was instinctively opposed to any development which threatened the aesthetic appeal of the landscape for tourists. Johnston took a different view on many such matters but he laced his memo with his own diagnosis for the failure of Scotland, especially the highlands, to capitalise on its natural assets for attracting tourists. In short, Johnston blamed the system of private ownership of land. The fact that such an extent of land was used for commercial sport meant that landowners had an incentive to keep tourists out. This prevented mountaineers, skiers and motorists from enjoying their pursuits in the highlands and contributing to the economy. If Johnston was exaggerating when he suggested that the highlands were as ‘inaccessible as Tibet’, there is no doubt that the tourist potential of the area was considerable and at this point largely untapped. Johnston also made the case that developing the tourist resources of the country would contribute to relieving the problem of unemployment in Scotland.⁴⁷⁰ Johnston was well aware that there was a demand for access to the highlands. In the ILP circles in which he still moved there was a tradition of organising walking and cycling activities in order to take industrial workers away from the deleterious urban environments into healthier landscapes beneficial to mind and body. New organisations, such as the Scottish Youth Hostels Association, founded in 1931, helped to service that demand they were effectively co-opted by the landowners and their representatives in order to ensure that access was controlled.⁴⁷¹ Although tourism became a key element of

⁴⁷⁰ TNA, PRO30/69/474, Memorandum on the development of Scotland as a health centre and tourist resort; Johnston to Macdonald, 13 Sep. 1929.

⁴⁷¹ William Knox, *Industrial Nation*, 198; Hayden Lorimer, ‘Happy hostelling in the highlands’: citizenship and the inter-war youth movement’, *SGM*, 113 (1997), 42–50.

attempts to develop the highland economy in the post-war period there were those who argued that it did not represent a meaningful form of development, that it was a soft option compared to land settlement, hydro-electric schemes or industrial schemes.⁴⁷² There were a range of obstacles in trying to develop a tourist industry in the highlands; principally, the rudimentary nature of the road network and the absence of affordable accommodation.

The problem of transport was central to most discussions about the development of the highland economy. As we have seen in earlier chapters, the arrival of the railway in the highlands in the 1860s was vital in the development of the economy of the sporting estate. While the extension of the railway system in the 1890s did not bring the benefits which many expected, it is significant that this was seen as a means of economic development through better facilities for more efficient marketing of fish and agricultural produce. During the inter-war period the Scottish Office and the Ministry of Transport initiated the Township Roads scheme and the Crofting Counties roads scheme in order to attempt to reduce the isolation of small communities in the highlands. That this was an issue which exercised the people who lived in such places can be seen by the contents of the archive of any politician who represented a highland constituency. Often this focused on the most egregious cases of isolation, such as the Applecross area of Wester Ross. As the local doctor pointed out to his county councillor (who passed the letter to the MP):

⁴⁷² NLS, Lachlan Grant Mss, Acc. 12187/9, f. 35, cutting, 'Highland Development League', *Paisley Daily Express*, 22 Feb, 1936; Lachlan Grant, 'Our wonderful heritage', *Northern Times*, 1 Mar. 1934;

The only access to the outside world is an execrable road, narrow, winding and tortuous rising to a height of over 2000 feet in six miles, with a gradient of 1 in 4, steeper than any road in Scotland and a surface which beggars description.

In the winter the only way out of the area was to take the mail steamer to Stornoway and Kyle of Lochalsh, a round trip of 110 miles across rough sea to a place only 10 miles away by sea. Dr MacLean concluded that ‘Applecross is being served today as it was five centuries ago – by a pair of oars’.⁴⁷³ Clearly, this was an extreme case but there was no doubt, that as road transport became more important in the inter-war period, that the highlands were very badly served in this respect. The Crofting Counties scheme made some contribution to dealing with the problem but it was delayed by the Second World War and never recovered momentum in the post-war period. This left the highland with serious transport problems in the post-war period. The Advisory Panel on the Highlands paid particular attention to this issue from its appointment in 1947 and the issue became particularly prominent in the early 1960s when, with the report entitled *The Reshaping of British Railways* by Dr Richard Beeching, was published in 1963. Since nationalisation the financial performance of the railways had been declining and losses were mounting, they were nearly £90m in the year before Beeching’s investigation.⁴⁷⁴

This controversial document recommended the termination of all passenger services on the lines from Inverness to Wick and Thurso and to Kyle of Lochalsh. Stopping services

⁴⁷³ Durham University Library, Malcolm MacDonald Mss, 4/1/26, Ronald MacLean to Cllr Donald MacKenzie, 7 Jan. 1936. This collection is full of material about roads and bridges; see 5/5/44 and 49 for MacDonald’s correspondence (8 Feb and 22 Feb 1938) with the Chairman of the Highways Committee of the County Council,

⁴⁷⁴ Charles Loft, ‘Reappraisal and reshaping: government and the railway problem 1951–64, *Contemporary British History*, 15 (2001), 72–91.

from Fort William to Mallaig were to be withdrawn.⁴⁷⁵ This was a reversal of the original argument in favour of railways in the highlands in the late Victorian period: that they were modern and could contribute to economic development. Railways were now seen in some quarters as outmoded and economically irrational. In the highlands the response to Beeching's proposals was twofold. There was a public campaign against the closures. The *Inverness Courier* argued that, instead of wasting time campaigning for a University in Inverness, those interested in the development of the region should try to counter railway closures.⁴⁷⁶ There was even an organisation in Inverness called 'MacPuff' which campaigned against the Beeching proposals. In official circles, however, a more detailed argument unfolded that was based on the point in the Beeching report that in some rural areas road construction and improvement was required before 'full alternatives to the rail services' could be provided.⁴⁷⁷ This was the cue for a complex argument involving the Scottish Office, responsible for Scotland's roads since 1956, the Treasury and Ministry of Transport in Whitehall as well as those who ran the bus and ferry services in the highlands. The latter spotted an opportunity and repeatedly expressed their confidence that they could take up the slack. The St Andrews House argument was that the highland road network was not adequate to absorb the extra traffic if the rail closures were to take place and improvements to the road network would be required. In the Scottish Office there was an understandable reluctance to pick up the bill for this work given that the rail closure programme was imposed from the outside. Whitehall, in the form of the Ministry of Transport and the Treasury, were not especially keen on this argument as they were

⁴⁷⁵ British Railways Board [BRB], *The Reshaping of British Railways, Part 2: Maps* (HMSO, 1963), Map 9.

⁴⁷⁶ *Inverness Courier*, 25 Oct. 1963.

⁴⁷⁷ BRB, *The Reshaping of British Railways, Part 1: Report*, 20.

worried that a positive response to it would set a precedent for other rural areas in the UK, especially in Wales, where there were transport difficulties. In response, traditional arguments in favour of the highlands were deployed, most notably the danger of depopulation and that there were significant precedents for special treatment of the region. The position was complicated by the creation in 1962, following the Kilbrandon report on highland transport, of the Highland Transport Board with a remit to coordinate road, air, sea and rail transport in the highlands. This body proved to be short-lived and it was absorbed by the HIDB in 1965. In the end a combination of factors, including electoral considerations, induced the government to pull back from accepting Beeching's recommendations for the highlands. The main lines were kept open, the only losses being branch lines, such as that from Oban to Ballachulish. It is striking that during the debate about railway closures in the highlands there was very little articulation of the argument that the lines were part of the modern economy of the region. The principal arguments used were concerned with tourism and the role which railways could play in bringing traditional products like fish and livestock to the market. This provides a striking historical continuity as these were the original objectives of those who promoted the introduction and extension of the railway network in the highlands in the late nineteenth century. As we have seen the years from the late 1950s to the early 1960s saw a range of initiatives from government, sometimes in partnership with the private sector, and local authorities and interests in the highlands with the objective of trying to deal with the problems of the region. These projects had a variety of outcomes and there was no real sense of coordination between the agencies bringing them forward. Although it is tempting to posit a link between this experience and the advent of the Highlands and

Islands Development Board, which sought such coordination, this does not stand up to scrutiny. As has been noted the Conservative government had taken preliminary steps towards such a board in the early 1960s.

Chapter Six.

A Martial Tradition

Militarism was central to the development of the modern Highlands and the Highlands were central to the making of the Scottish martial tradition. The historical demand by the state for highland recruits and the strategies used by highland landowners to provide men was related to their estate management. The subdivision of traditional townships and the creation of crofting communities, a response to the profits to be had from kelp and fishing, were also a result of recruiting as land was awarded to returning soldiers, often at the expense of other small tenants. Although some rhetoric linked this activity with the former history of clanship, the British state was far more successful in recruiting highlanders than were Jacobite clan chiefs in the era before 1746. Although for some landlords, such as Lord Lovat, the motivation for early post-Culloden recruitment was political rehabilitation, this is not a sufficient explanation for the vast scale of highland recruiting in the second half of the eighteenth century. Increasingly indebted highland landlords saw recruiting as a means of raising capital that avoided the sale of ancestral lands and provided them with equally valuable political capital in London.⁴⁷⁸ The skilful use of tartan as a ‘recognizable brand in a lucrative marketplace’ was an important element of their success in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁴⁷⁹ As has been well-documented, the generation after the Napoleonic Wars were particularly difficult in the highlands, culminating the famine of the 1840s. The demise of recruiting as a dimension

⁴⁷⁸ Andrew MacKillop, *‘More Fruitful than the Soil’: Army, Empire and the Scottish Highlands, 1715–1815* (East Linton, 2000), 130–67.

⁴⁷⁹ Matthew P. Dziennik, ‘Whig tartan: material culture and its use in the Scottish highlands in the Scottish highlands, 1746–1815’, *Past and Present*, no 217 (November 2012), 122; Stana Nenadic, *Lairds and Luxury: The Highland Gentry in Eighteenth-century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2007), 89–111.

of estate management and income was part of the difficulty. Indeed, large numbers of returning soldiers may have accelerated the process of eviction in areas of heavy recruitment, such as Sutherland.

The result of this process was that the eighteenth-century army was disproportionately Scottish, but by the late nineteenth century Scots were under-represented, in contrast to the Irish.⁴⁸⁰ Many Scottish and highland regiments recruited most of their soldiers from furth of Scotland. Wars such as that in the Crimea in the 1850s were hardly glorious theatres and there is some evidence of the prominence of the highland regiments stimulating resentment among those associated with other units who felt the attention was undeserved.⁴⁸¹ Nevertheless, with such prominent fans as William Howard Russell, the pre-eminent war correspondent of *The Times*, positive images triumphed. The Highland regiments also had royal patronage from Queen Victoria, not least in the rebranding of the 79th Regiment as the *Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders* in 1873. The 1857 rebellion in India, especially the involvement of the Seaforth Highlanders in the relief of Lucknow, provided yet more evidence of the effectiveness of the Highland regiments, as did conflicts in Africa, India and Afghanistan in the late nineteenth century.⁴⁸²

Considerable literary effort was expended to maintain the the Scottish martial tradition. Publications such as *The Brave Sons of Skye*, which celebrated the contribution to the

⁴⁸⁰ H.J. Hanham, 'Religion and nationality in the mid-Victorian army', in M.R.D. Foot (ed.), *War and Society: Essays in Honour and memory of J.R. Western, 1928–1971* (London, 1973), 162–7.

⁴⁸¹ Edward M. Spiers, *The Scottish Soldier and Empire, 1854–1902* (Edinburgh, 2006), 6.

⁴⁸² John M. MacKenzie, *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850–1950* (Manchester, 1992), 116; Edward M. Spiers, 'Highland soldier: imperial impact and image', *Northern Scotland*, new series, 1 (2010), 80–1.

British army of that island, were common in the 1890s. The raw materials existed in the distinctive Scottish, and more especially highland, regiments. The ‘Highlandism’ of these regiments resided in their uniforms and histories rather than their personnel, which were diverse. Defenders of the highland regiments argued that even if their soldiers were from the Scottish lowlands or England the traditions and history of the regiment provided a ‘mighty strength-giving power’ which would ensure that ‘none but the veriest poltroon could prove unfaithful to the duty’.⁴⁸³ Nevertheless, the difficulties of recruiting men for these regiments, especially from their local areas, led to proposals for their amalgamation.⁴⁸⁴ Even modest proposals in 1881 for regimental reform caused howls of protest and the suppression of highland regimental identities was headed off. The highland regiments had vocal support and obvious symbols – especially the kilt and regimental tartan – to defend. Lowland regiments were treated less favourably: four were amalgamated to form the Cameronians and the Highland Light Infantry, which recruited in Glasgow and Lanarkshire. The Cameron Highlanders, on the other hand were left, unusually, as a single battalion regiment. The survival of these regimental identities was crucial to successful recruiting drive at the beginning of the Great War.⁴⁸⁵

Individual personalities were also vitally important to the creation of the cult of the highland soldier and none served the purpose better than Hector Macdonald. MacDonald

⁴⁸³ Lt.Col. John MacInnes, *The Brave Sons of Skye* (Edinburgh, 1899), the author was an officer in the 5th Volunteer Battalion of Princess Louise’s Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders; the quote is from James Cromb and David L. Cromb, *The Highland Brigade: Its Battles and Heroes* (Stirling, 1902), xii. James Cromb was a journalist on the *Peoples Journal*, a very popular newspaper published in Dundee; he worked hard to praise the highland regiments even in their darkest hours, see his pamphlet entitled *The Majuba Disaster: A Story of Highland Heroism Told by Officers of the 92nd Regiment* (Dundee, 1891).

⁴⁸⁴ Edward M. Spiers, *Late Victorian Army, 1868–1902* (Manchester, 1992), 127.

⁴⁸⁵ Hew Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford, 1997), 204–5; Spiers, *Late Victorian army*, 126–7.

was a Gaelic-speaking crofter's son from the Black Isle who began a meteoric military career by joining the Inverness Volunteers in 1868 and then enlisted in the Gordon Highlanders in 1870. After active service in Afghanistan in 1879 he received a Commission in 1880. This was in an age when it was extremely rare for a soldier to be elevated from the ranks. He fought in many campaigns across a range of theatres in the 1880s and 1890s – South Africa, Egypt, Sudan – culminating in service in the second Boer War. In each of these campaigns, helped by assiduous contact with journalists, he burnished his reputation as a courageous and bold commander revered by his men. This was the basis for his nickname 'Fighting Mac' and his rapid ascent through the ranks to Major-General. His demotic qualities did not serve him well, however, in his final posting to Ceylon. There were tensions with the socially elitist planter community and MacDonald was engulfed in scandal after allegations of paedophilia. These caused him to be sent home and have been presumed to have been the cause of his suicide in a Paris hotel in March 1903. Even this shocking event did not dent his hero status in Scotland. This had been carefully cultivated in the period since his public acclamation at set-piece events in Dingwall and Inverness in 1898. His controversial burial in Edinburgh – the locals had presumed that Dingwall would be his final resting place – was followed by the raising of memorials at Dingwall and Mulbuie.⁴⁸⁶ In his military career, as in the manner of his death, Hector Macdonald was an exception but the manipulation of his image did much to develop the cult of the highland soldier in the late nineteenth century, a cult which would serve important purposes in the twentieth century. Away from virtually

⁴⁸⁶ Roger T. Stearn, 'Macdonald, Sir Hector Archibald (1853–1903)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), online edn Sept 2011 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34702>]. Trevor Royle, *Fighting Mac: The Downfall of Major-General Sir Hector Macdonald* (Edinburgh, 2003).

unique figures like Macdonald, however, the relationship between militarism and the highlands was becoming more difficult.

The difficulties of military recruiting in the highlands were also connected to the land question. Highland depopulation had reduced the fertility of a formerly important breeding ground for soldiery. As *The Times* commented in 1855:

If we want men for our armies – and we do want men – we must go to Manchester or Birmingham, to the streets of the metropolis, – anywhere, but not to the highlands of Scotland. You may there go a long day’s journey and literally not see a house or a man. House and men have been there, but are there no more. Valleys have been cleared, villages effaced, the plough and the spade driven into exile, fields, gardens, busy communities swept away and forgotten, that primeval nature may resume her stern way.⁴⁸⁷

The article went on to criticise synthetic displays of highlandism and to lament that the recruiting potential of the region was far less than in the days of clanship. This view was criticised by Scottish newspapers, which pointed out that it was not depopulation, as such, that had caused the problem but changes in the distribution of the population and the experience of forty years of peace that had diminished the status and visibility of the army in society and reduced the attractiveness of a career in its ranks.⁴⁸⁸ The *Inverness Courier* argued that, aside from economic change,

⁴⁸⁷ *The Times*, 21 Sep. 1855,

⁴⁸⁸ *Scotsman*, 24 Sep. 1855,

Another circumstance affecting still more materially the recruitment of the army in the Highlands is the decay in the influence of the chiefs, arising from the numerous transfers of property and the disruption of that ancient bond between chief and clan which had reference to purposes of war and defence, and not to industry or the payment of rent.⁴⁸⁹

In Gaelic poetry there was praise for highland soldiers in the Crimea and elsewhere, based on newspaper accounts which gave prominence to the highland regiments, and criticism of evicting landowners who made recruitment more difficult and, thereby, compromised the security of the kingdom. The Tiree poet Alasdair MacDhòmhnaill's 'Cogadh a' Chrimea' expressed this view:

Nach cluinn sibh, uaislean na Ghàidhealtachd

Nach èisd sibh an dàn seo le mùirn?

'S ann dhuibhse bu chòir a bhith tàirrngte

Ri broilleach na nàmhaid air tùs;

Tha ur cuibhreann sa bheatha seo prìseil

Seach saighdearan dileas gu tùrn

Tha cathachadh onair na rioghachd

'S a' cumail an rìgh air a' chrùn.

Nach builich sibh cuid de ur treud

⁴⁸⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 4 Oct 1855, 5.

Achumail nan laoch ann am freumh?
‘S na fanadh an reothadh bhon cnàmhan,
Gu bràth chan fhannaicheadh eud.

Will you not hear, you Highland aristocrats?
Will you not listen gladly to this song?
It is you who ought to have been drawn in order
Close to the enemy’s chest from the start;
Your portion in this life is precious
Compared with soldiers loyal in deed,
Who fight for the honour of the kingdom
And keep the king on his throne.

Will you not assign part of your flock
To keeping the heroes secure in their roots?
If only frost would avoid their bones,
Their zeal would never grow weak.⁴⁹⁰

This aspect of memory in the highlands was deeply embedded. In the early 1930s Margaret Fay Shaw was able to collect songs about the Napoleonic Wars. One song recorded the King’s son asking ‘‘An iad so Gaidheal an Taobh Tuath?/Bha iad bhuam ‘s fhuair mi uil’ aid’ (Are these the Gaels from the North?/ I needed them and I have got

⁴⁹⁰ Donald E. Meek (ed.), *The Wiles of the World: Caran an t-Saoghail. Anthology of 19th Century Scottish Gaelic Verse* (Edinburgh, 2003), 308–9, 446–8.

them all'). If this was not quite, literally, true, it did convey a sense of the effect of army recruitment on the highlands in this period.⁴⁹¹

Although the creation of the crofting communities was linked to recruiting, critics of eviction pointed to the difficulties which resulted. In his powerful and widely read condemnation of the clearances Alexander MacKenzie went beyond ritual denunciation of evictions to make a wider point:

No race on record has suffered so much at the hands of those who should be their patrons, and proved to be so tenacious of patriotism as the Celtic race, but I assure you, it has found its level now, and will disappear soon altogether; and as soon as patriotism shall disappear in any nation, so sure that nation's glory is tarnished, victories uncertain, her greatness diminished, and decaying consumptive death will be the result. If ever the old adage, which says, "Those whom the gods are determined to destroy, they first deprive them of reason," was verified it was, and is, in the case of the British aristocracy and Highland proprietors in particular.⁴⁹²

The theme of the clearances as a threat to national unity recurred in critiques of the development of the highlands since the famine. This was also evident in the military dimensions of the protests of the 1880s. Crofters' spokesmen argued that a reservoir of soldiery was being drained. Their opponents suggested that the frequent appearance of the military in the highlands to quell disturbances could stimulate recruiting. It was

⁴⁹¹ Margaret Fay Shaw, *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist*, 3rd edition (Aberdeen, 1986), 94–5.

⁴⁹² Alexander MacKenzie, *History of the Highland Clearances* (Inverness, 1883), 147–8.

argued that the experience of the 1880s demonstrated the need for a permanent military force in the north-west highlands and Hebrides. This would be useful for crowd control but would also have wider benefits:

The presence of soldiers would I believe be highly popular in the locality where they were stationed. This would especially be the case if the troops were selected from some Highland regiment. The necessary expenditure both on the part of officers and men of money in the district must in some degree be felt by the small tradesmen and crofters and be to an appreciable extent a boon to the whole community. It would stimulate recruiting and this, while welcome to the military authorities, would of itself tend to relieve that congestion of population which to a large extent contributes to the poverty of the country.⁴⁹³

The simmering down of the protests from the spring of 1888 rendered this proposed force unnecessary. Although highland lawlessness was condemned and there were worries about attitudes to the police there was still a perception that the crofters had military potential. A senior Conservative politician argued that they ‘belonged to a race who had a very high idea of the powers and position of the sovereign and of those who served under her in the army and navy.’⁴⁹⁴ This view did not go unchallenged. In evidence to a Committee on the terms and conditions of army service the Commander of the 1st Battalion of the Cameron Highlanders presented a different picture. He reported that

⁴⁹³ NRS, AF67/41, Lochiel to R.W. Cochran Patrick (Under-secretary for Scotland), 4 Feb. 1888; see also NRS GD40/16/12/63–8, Confidential Memorandum ...on the best way of employing an armed force in the Highlands and Islands (1888).

⁴⁹⁴ BL, Add Mss 51276, ff. 148–9, J.H.A. MacDonald to duke to Richmond and Gordon, 19 Sep. 1885

recruiting activity in Inverness-shire was ‘miserable in its unproductiveness’ and the number of recruits from that county was ‘insignificant’. There were, in fact, only ten in 1891. He identified a number of reasons for the state of affairs:

...the men are addicted to slothfulness and have a stay-at-home inclination, moreover the teaching of the Free Church and the political agitators interfere with our recruiting efforts; as a matter of fact there are too many men for the districts and yet they will not enlist.

He noted that the militia was much more popular as service in it could be much more readily combined with crofting and fishing and was a useful alternative source of income when, in the words of one militiaman, ‘there was no work to be had’. The Camerons officer argued that the golden age of Highland recruiting between 1770 and 1810 was a product of coercion and that the decline of landlord power and increasing independence of the highlander worked against enlistment.⁴⁹⁵

In the mid to late 1930s as international tension increased those arguing for the economic development of the Highlands used the likely strategic importance of the area in a future European war as an argument for encouraging the government to attend to its grievances.

⁴⁹⁵ PP 1892, *Report of the Committee Appointed by the Secretary of State for War to consider the terms and conditions of Service in the army* [C. 6582–I] , Qs 12256–74, quote from Q. 12256; Angus MacLellan, *The Furrow Behind Me: The Autobiography of a Hebridean Crofter*, translated by John Lorne Campbell (Edinburgh, 1997), 16.

In 1938 Lachlan Grant, leader of the Highland Development League, argued in terms which were reminiscent of Alexander Mackenzie's:

When the hour of trial comes for Britain, as come it certainly will do, deer forests, fir forests and depleted sheep stocks and curtailed grazing lands will not be much of a bulwark.⁴⁹⁶

Imperial ventures proved more useful to the maintenance of a Scottish martial tradition. The Indian rebellion of 1857 was the site of a renewed emphasis on the tradition of the highlanders as a martial race and the little wars of the new empire in Africa provided opportunities to triumph over unsophisticated enemies.⁴⁹⁷ The myth of the Highland soldier could be adapted to meet new contexts. Although commercialised sport was one factor in the depopulation of the highlands in the nineteenth century it could be repackaged to meet military needs. Lord Lovat, in raising his Scouts for the second Boer War in the late 1890s, demonstrated that the skills required to service the sporting economy could be utilised for military purposes. Lovat believed that stalkers and ghillies had skills which were in demand in South Africa.⁴⁹⁸ Nevertheless, he was disappointed in the way his Scouts were used in South Africa – they were deployed as a unit rather than individual Scouts being attached to other units in order to make use of their unique skills.⁴⁹⁹ Given the fears of racial degeneration which greeted the realisation of the

⁴⁹⁶ *Northern Times*, 22 Sep. 1938.

⁴⁹⁷ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester, 2004), 55–62, 69–75, 173–85.

⁴⁹⁸ *Inverness Courier*, 5, 9, 16 Jan. 1900; Francis Lindley, *Lord Lovat: A Biography* (London, 1935), 75–81, 171–96. M. L. Melville, *The Story of the Lovat Scouts* (Edinburgh, 1981), 4–8, 28–33.

⁴⁹⁹ *Parliamentary Debates (Lords)*, 4th ser., vol. 138, cols 237–9 (18 July 1904).

unhealthy condition of many urban recruits, the Scouts were lauded in terms which were familiar in stereotypes of the highland soldier. In a debate in the House of Lords, the earl of Errol remarked that they were of ‘magnificent physique, they are not the narrow-chested youths that we are accustomed to look upon as the recruits of the line regiments’.⁵⁰⁰ The Lovat Scouts remained an important and highly distinctive element of the Highland military tradition after the Boer War, serving throughout the Great War on the Western Front and at Gallipoli and also during the Second World War in such diverse missions as the occupation of the Faroe Islands and the invasion of Italy in 1943.

The Boer War, indeed, saw a number of themes come together. The recruiting process was difficult due to the shocking physical condition of many volunteers, a revelation which induced anxiety about the future of the empire and stimulated social reform. The Boers were difficult to subdue, and Scottish regiments figured prominently in the reverses of ‘Black Week’ in December 1899. Even the kilt, pre-eminent symbol of Scottish military identity, proved problematic: ‘when kilted soldiers were pinned to the ground ... for many hours under a blazing sun, the backs of their knees became so burnt and blistered that many were rendered *hors de combat* for several days’.⁵⁰¹

Despite the problems with the volunteer system during the Boer War there was in 1914 a determination to fight with a volunteer army which would ensure virtue in victory. One newspaper described conscription as ‘hateful ... unbefitting to a great and momentous occasion like the present...’ and to be contrasted with ‘enthusiasm and ardour for

⁵⁰⁰ *Parliamentary Debates (Lords)*, 4th ser., vol. 135, col. 318 (19 May 1904).

⁵⁰¹ Spiers, ‘Scottish soldier in the Boer war’, 158.

personal service'.⁵⁰² This depended on a vast exercise of propaganda to encourage men to enlist. The Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, wanted to create a new army of raw recruits who could be moulded into professional outfits. In attempting to do this he decided not to create new regiments, as had been the case in the eighteenth century, but to add additional battalions to existing regiments. The traditions of long-established regiments with strong local identities could be deployed in recruiting appeals.

A further noteworthy feature of the recruiting drive was the role of the landowning class. The late nineteenth century had seen a diminution of their role and prestige, although they were by no means a spent force, as the rearguard action against the land legislation of 1911 had shown. In a faint echo of the position in the aftermath of the 1745 rebellion, the advent of a voluntary recruiting campaign at the beginning of the Great War gave some proprietors an opportunity to raise their profile through their regimental associations. This was further evidence of their latent power as social leaders and that the events of the 1880s had not completely eroded their ability to extract deference from the highland population.⁵⁰³ As Lord Lovat had noted as early as 1905, in the course of complaints about the quantity and quality of the officer class:

The whole of our army is founded on the voluntary system of service, and the men in it must be led and not driven. The iron discipline of the Germans is inapplicable in our case.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰² *Nairnshire Telegraph*, 8 Jun. 1915.

⁵⁰³ Ewen A. Cameron, 'The political influence of highland landowners: a reassessment', *Northern Scotland*, 14 (1994), 27–45.

⁵⁰⁴ *Parliamentary Debates (Lords)*, 4th ser., vol. 150, col. 156 (25 Jul. 1905).

This was a key motif of recruiting for the Great War: the war must be fought and won with a volunteer army. This would enhance the inevitable, emphatic victory. Sir Donald Cameron of Lochiel emphasised his own proprietorial, in the widest sense of that word, role in the process;

I want to raise a thousand Highlanders for my own battalion and I have no doubt I shall have little difficulty in doing so; but having regard to the fact that Highlanders are now scattered all over the face of the earth, I must specially appeal to the officials and committees of the different highland county and clan societies in Glasgow, Edinburgh and elsewhere to assist me in my endeavours by becoming my recruiting agents.⁵⁰⁵

The duke of Argyll, a former Governor General of Canada and a significant figure in the development of Scottish military traditions in Canada, also referred to the global task of voluntary recruiting for highland regiments. He elided significant issues relating to depopulation in his appeal:

Through causes purely economic, of which the growth of the dominions is the chief, there are no longer such great surplus populations in the Highlands of Argyll and its Isles. By the lifting of his finger or Cross of Fire, MacCailein cannot perhaps raise the men he once could have done, but he thinks the old spirit,

⁵⁰⁵ *Inverness Courier*, 28 Aug. 1914.

hardly yet dormant, is yet alive amongst his vassals, whose forbears so often rallied round the Kings of old.⁵⁰⁶

By the point at which this speech was made the recruiting campaign had stalled and the purpose of Argyll's appeal to history was an attempt to reignite it.

Although this rhetoric can be interpreted in a variety of ways, not least as an attempt by social elites to control the process of recruiting, its effect was questionable. The motivations of those who signed up during the voluntary period have been the subject of recent scholarly debate. Gone is the romantic notion of men motivated by patriotism rushing to the colours in a flush of martial enthusiasm.⁵⁰⁷ At the other end of the spectrum is the idea of economic motivations. Although army pay was not generous it was at least regular and important to a low wage economy like Scotland with recent memory of economic depression.⁵⁰⁸ This applied to the highlands as well as the industrial areas. Although much has been made of the extent of the response from the highland counties in the first years of the war, great care has to be taken not to add a new layer of romanticism to highland military history. Attempts to do this began almost immediately after the end of the War. The popular author W.C. MacKenzie, a Lewisman, argued that where once the dirk had been wielded 'in quarrels that were petty and in causes that were unjust' the Great War gave an opportunity for the bayonet of the highland soldier to be

⁵⁰⁶ *Oban Times*, 5 Dec. 1914.

⁵⁰⁷ Gerard J. De Groot, *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War* (London, 1996), 42–53; Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge, 2008), 70–111.

⁵⁰⁸ P.E. Dewey, 'Military recruiting and the British labour force during the First World War', *Historical Journal*, 27 (1984), 199–223; Derek Young, 'Voluntary recruitment in Scotland, 1914 to 1916', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2001.

used in a cause characterised by ‘honour and righteousness’, namely the ‘preservation of civilisation itself’.⁵⁰⁹ Mackenzie continued this theme in his later publications, especially his general history of the highlands. In this book he was keen to exalt the ‘fighting qualities of the race ... from the great territorial lord down to the humblest crofter...’ and to suggest that although ‘mass psychology may account for some degree of the enthusiasm ... in the main it was the result of a deep-seated belief in the justice and urgency of the case.’⁵¹⁰ Modern scholarship has shown that the matter was not so simple but it is understandable that authors such as MacKenzie, closer to the generation who fought and died in the Great War, did not pose searching questions. Although not wishing to suggest a deterministic analysis of recruiting, the social and economic context in which it took place ought to be explored.

Some economic activities were affected adversely by the war: commercialised sport and the fishing industry were obvious examples but the Harris tweed industry and the work of distilleries are others. In the first case it was reported that highland moors and lodges were ‘as silent as in the dead of winter’ and that this was having a negative effect on the prosperity of the region.⁵¹¹ In recognition that there was an asset which was not being utilised effectively, the Defence of the Realm Act was used to turn deer forests over to food production. Local Agricultural Executive Committees were formed to undertake this task, they were mostly composed of crofters and they carried it out by offering short-term

⁵⁰⁹ W.C. MacKenzie, ‘The Highlands and the War’, *Stornoway Gazette*, 3 Jan. 1919, 3.

⁵¹⁰ W.C. MacKenzie, *The Highlands and Isles of Scotland: A Historical Survey*, rev. edn (Edinburgh and London, 1949), 286–7.

⁵¹¹ *Inverness Courier*, 18 Sep. 1914.

leases to other crofters to cultivate plots on former sporting land.⁵¹² Although this had minimal effect on food production, it was highly symbolic and served to take the heat out of the land question for the duration of the war. Rather like the temporary rent reductions offered to urban tenants by legislation of 1915, this concession proved difficult to withdraw without engendering further protest and the long-term effect was probably a complicating one.

The fishing industry was brought to an almost complete standstill. There were several problems. The first was that the traditional markets for Scottish herring in northern Germany, the Baltic and Russia, were cut off. Further, the danger of submarine warfare and the call-up of many fishermen and ancillary workers, such as coopers, for the Royal Naval Reserve added to the difficulties. One observer described the condition of Wick harbour, normally in August a bustling centre of the fishing industry, as exhibiting a ‘deplorable scene of desolation’ in 1914.⁵¹³ The impact of the war was all the greater as the years immediately before its outbreak had seen exceptionally good herring fishing around the Scottish coast. The landings in 1915 were only around a third of those of 1914.⁵¹⁴ It was suggested that the government should take on the stock of herring which had been landed, 50,000 barrels at Wick alone, and attempt to find a market for it in Russia in order to compensate the stricken industry.⁵¹⁵ These circumstances meant that fishing areas around the Moray Firth had very high enlistment rates.⁵¹⁶ This bears out the

⁵¹² Robertson, ‘Historical Geography’, 117–21.

⁵¹³ *John O’Groat Journal*, 14 Aug. 1914.

⁵¹⁴ James R. Coull, *The Sea Fisheries of Scotland: A Historical Geography* (Edinburgh, 1996), 135–8, 154–5.

⁵¹⁵ *John O’Groat Journal*, 28 Aug. 1914.

⁵¹⁶ *Elgin Courant and Courier*, 7 Aug. 1914, referring to the effect of the war on the fishing community of Lossiemouth on the Moray coast.

idea that recruitment was partly motivated by economic circumstances. It was not that fishermen were more patriotic than crofters, just that they had fewer alternatives open to them as the war unfolded.

Other scholars have pointed to the relationship between recruiting and demography. It has been noted that by some measures the highland counties produced very high numbers of recruits. One source suggests that if the Scottish counties are ranked according to the proportion of men of military age recruited in the period between August 1914 and the end of April 1915, the Highland counties come at the very top of the league table. The region includes the only three counties – Perth, Inverness and Sutherland – where more than 60 per cent of the relevant age group had signed up. The economic difficulties detailed above probably had a greater effect than the rhetoric of landowners and others. To this, according to one recent scholar, ought to be added certain demographic features. The relatively large group of unmarried men in highland society, a group which tended to be more readily recruited than their older married colleagues, produced relatively high recruiting figures. The picture is not uniform across the north of Scotland, Orkney and, especially, Shetland had some of the lowest figures of recruiting in this period. It has been suggested that this was because of the importance of the seafaring tradition in these islands. This led men into the merchant navy and the Royal Naval Reserve, leaving relatively few for the army recruiting sergeant. This research shows that there is an especially strong correlation between numbers of Gaelic speakers in a population and recruiting levels.⁵¹⁷ So, it seems that in the matter of military recruiting in the first part of

⁵¹⁷ Dan Coetzee, 'A life and death decision: the influence of trends in fertility, nuptiality and family economies on voluntary enlistment in Scotland, August 1914 to December 1915', *Family and Community*

the Great War, the Highland line was a meaningful boundary. Other sources, however, point in a contrary direction: can this problem be resolved?

There was a tendency in the local press to laud the extent to which the men of the highlands were signing up for service.⁵¹⁸ There are many areas of the UK which claim that their locality provided the most recruits per capita and/or suffered the greatest level of casualties. The highlands are no exception and the claim is probably most frequently made for the island of Lewis.⁵¹⁹ As we have seen, recent statistical work seems to support this assertion. Other evidence points in a different direction: it would seem that many of these recruits must have come forward to recruiting offices in other parts of Scotland as the figures for the numbers presenting in Inverness and at Fort George were relatively low. It is entirely possible, of course, given the extent of migration from the highlands, that young men recorded in the census of 1911 as resident in highland counties should have been present in Glasgow or other areas of the Scottish lowlands during 1914 and 1915. The popularity and importance in crofting areas of the Royal Naval Reserve and the territorial battalions of units like the Camerons and the Lovat Scouts meant that many men were likely already committed and not part of the drive to create the new armies. A further noticeable feature of recruiting in the highland areas was the relatively low proportion of army recruitment compared to total recruitment, indicating the popularity of

History, 8 (2005), 77–89; Dan Coetzee, ‘Measures of enthusiasm: new avenues in quantifying variations in voluntary enlistment in Scotland, August 1914–December 1915’, *Local Population Studies*, No 74 (Spring 2005), 16–35 (Coetzee’s ingenious methodology relies very heavily on relating material from the census of 1911 to the information in the Memorandum on Compulsory Service produced by the government in May 1915 and preserved in The National Archives at WO162/27); Linda Riddell, ‘Shetland and the Great War’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2012,

⁵¹⁸ *Inverness Courier* 20 Oct. 1914; *Oban Times*, 5 Sep. 1914 (letter from ‘Skyeman’); *Ross-shire Journal* 21 Aug. 1914.

⁵¹⁹ See W.C. MacKenzie, ‘The Highlands and the War’, *Stornoway Gazette*, 3 Jan. 1919, 3.

naval service in the region. The proportion of army recruits at Fort George was 10.4 per cent; Inverness 16.7 per cent; Aberdeen, 33.5 per cent. This can be contrasted with lowland industrial areas such as Hamilton, 83.7 per cent; Glasgow, 71.2 per cent.⁵²⁰ It has been widely noted, however, that rural areas across Britain and Ireland tended to produce lower levels of recruiting than urban areas and the highlands may have been part of this pattern although there was not the active and politicised opposition to recruiting which was evident in Ireland.⁵²¹

There were, also, different patterns of recruiting to different types of units in the principal Highland regiments. The three remaining regiments with strong associations with the main highland counties – the Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders, Princess Louise’s Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and the Seaforth Highlanders – each had two regular battalions which participated in the British Expeditionary Force in 1914. There were further battalions of the territorial force of weekend soldiers formed in the Edwardian period. Most of these troops volunteered for overseas service and saw action in the early part of 1915. To this strength was added eleven ‘Service’, or ‘New Army’, battalions; these were the recruits who responded to Kitchener’s appeal for recruits at the beginning of the war. These men were raw and untrained and only saw action in the late summer of

⁵²⁰ Young, ‘Voluntary recruiting’, 285, 368. The experience of these seafarers has not been well represented in the burgeoning historiography of the Great War.

⁵²¹ Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2012), 147–62; Keith Jeffery, ‘The Irish military tradition and the British empire’, in Keith Jeffery (ed.), *An Irish Empire? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester, 1996), 94–122; David Fitzpatrick, ‘Militarism in Ireland, 1900–22’, in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (eds), *A Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996), 379–406; Terence Denman, ‘“The red livery of shame”: the campaign against army recruitment in Ireland, 1899–1914’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 29 (1994–5), 208–33; Cyril Parry, ‘Gwynedd and the Great War, 1914–18’, *Welsh History Review*, 14 (1988–9), 78–117; Cameron, *Impaled on a Thistle*, 105–12.

1915 after training in the south of England.⁵²² This meant that the links between highland communities and the war was steadily increased over the first year or so of the war. The concomitant was that war losses spread in the same way. Regular losses were experienced in 1914, many territorials fell at Festubert in May 1915 and the losses spread to the 'New Army' recruits from the Highlands from the devastating Battle of Loos which began in late September 1915. In this stage of the war there was still a great deal of effort going into raising the profile and celebrating the history of the highland regiments.⁵²³

Loos, one of the most lethal battles in Scottish history, was an important turning point in the history of the effect of the Great War in the highlands. Although 2nd Ypres and Festubert in April and May 1915 had the potential to 'awaken the nation to a full sense of the realities and responsibilities of the situation' it could still be said in June 1915 that the losses were not such as to 'daunt or dismay'.⁵²⁴ Loos, however, was the point at which losses began to mount and to affect families who had no history of involvement with the army.⁵²⁵ The result was sobering. It was also the occasion of renewed celebration of the actions of the highland regiments, especially the 7th Battalion of the QOCH under the command of the Clan Chief. Fr M'Neill of Eriskay, one of the Chaplains to the regiment,

⁵²² E.A. James, *British Regiments, 1914–1918* (London, 1978), 103–8; for an excellent history of a highland territorial battalion see Patrick Watt, *Steel and Tartan: The 4th Cameron Highlanders in the Great War* (Stroud, 2012); Patrick Watt, 'The last Scottish invasion of England: the Highland Division in Bedford, 1914–1915', *History Scotland*, 13(1) (Jan/Feb, 2013), 44–9.

⁵²³ Frederick Watson, *The Story of the Highland Regiments* (London, 1915), Watson was the son of 'Iain MacLaren', Rev. John Watson, the Kailyard novelist; J.H. Stevenson, *The Story of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 91st and 93rd Foot* (Glasgow, 1915); Captain I.H.M. Scobie, *An Old Highland Fencible Corps: The History of the Reay Fencible Highland Regiment of Foot, or MacKay's Highlanders, 1794–1802* (Edinburgh, 1914), the last was a more scholarly account.

⁵²⁴ *Inverness Courier*, 27 Apr., 28 May, 11 Jun. 10 Aug. 1915; Watt, *Steel and Tartan*, 53–68.

⁵²⁵ Trevor Royle, *The Flowers of the Forest: Scotland and the First World War* (Edinburgh, 2006), 93.

was brought into the propaganda effort to praise Lochiel and testify to the popularity of highland soldiers with the French army and civilian population.⁵²⁶ The initial reaction to the battle centred on the actions of the 7th battalion of the QOCH, one of the service battalions. They had advanced far beyond their support and immediate objective, Hill 70, and had incurred appalling losses as a result. Local opinion in the highlands shifted from pride to suspicion of possible leadership blunders in the subsequent loss of Hill 70 and resentment against censorship.⁵²⁷ Interest in the battle was immense and the *Inverness Courier* published a pamphlet as ‘an incentive to such of the young and fit in the highlands who have not yet joined to colours’.⁵²⁸ The noted war artist Fortunino Matania was commissioned to produce a painting to be called ‘The Remnant of the Highland Brigade Charging Down Hill 70’.⁵²⁹

The key battles of the Great War are dealt with in the Gaelic poetry of the period. Arras, the Somme and the use of poison gas are themes in the poems of Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna (Donald Macdonald) of North Uist. The name of the township from which he came is redolent of the long connection of that island to European conflict. He wrote of the scale of the fighting of the summer of 1916: ‘Chaidh ni ciadan a mhilleadh,/Chaidh an talamh às a rian/’S chaidh an iarmailt gu mireag.’ (Hundreds were destroyed, The earth dissolved in chaos/ And the sky went awry).⁵³⁰ Aside from the work of individual poets,

⁵²⁶ *Oban Times*, 23 Oct. 1915.

⁵²⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 1, 5, 12, 15 Oct, 1915.

⁵²⁸ *The Cameron Highlanders at the Battles of Loos, Hill 70, Fosse 8 and the Quarries* (Inverness, 1915).

⁵²⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 7 Apr. 1916; it is not clear if this painting was produced under this title but the actions of the 7th Camerons was the subject of post-war painting by Joseph Gray.

⁵³⁰ Black (ed.), *An Tuil*, ‘Air an Somm’ (‘On the Somme’), 124–5; see also ‘Oran Arras’ (‘The Song of Arras’), 122–3, and ‘Oran a’ Phuinnsein’ (‘The song of the poison’), 130–1; Derick Thomson, *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry* (2nd edition, Edinburgh, 1989), 259, differs from Black and finds these works ‘trite’ and lacking in clarity.

the Great War had a devastating effect ('crushed ... brutally' according to one critic) on the romantic tradition of Gaelic poetry which had flourished in the years before 1914.⁵³¹ Although many poets of the Great War drew on traditions from earlier periods, some were highly innovative, not least the tragic figure of Iain Rothach (1889–1918), an officer in the Seaforth Highlanders. He was a gifted scholar and poet killed at Ypres only three days after winning the Military Cross. Only a small corpus of his work survives but its free verse style was influenced by contemporaries writing in English and, according to the leading critics, is suggestive of the work of much later Gaelic poets.⁵³²

Land and Military Service

Given the historical associations of grants of land being made in return for military service and the expectations at the time of the outbreak of the Great War, only three years after the passage of the Small Landholders Bill it is not surprising that the land question remained current. Indeed, the outbreak of the war coincided with plans for ceremonies to mark the centenary of the Sutherland clearances. A commemoration took place on 5 August but it was overshadowed by international events. Nevertheless, a resolution pointing to the 'necessity of a remedy which will repopulate these straths' and regretting the 'inoperative' nature of the 1911 Act, was passed.⁵³³ Although the intensity of protest on the land question was reduced during the war, frustration mounted over the course of the conflict and land raids began to recur in late 1917 and 1918. One of the most interesting was that which took place at Balephetrish on Tiree in 1918. On this occasion

⁵³¹ Black (ed.), *An Tuil*, xxii; Sorley MacLean, 'Realism in Gaelic Poetry', *TGSI*, 37 (1934–6), 80–114.

⁵³² Black (ed.), *An Tuil*, xxiv, 214–19, 748–9; Thomson, *Introduction*, 252–4.

⁵³³ *John O'Groat Journal*, 14, Aug. 1914.

the raiders used the argument that they were seeking to bring this farm under cultivation for food production.⁵³⁴

In the aftermath of the war the notion of fighting for land was articulated frequently, often in association with threats to raid land. These threats were carried out in many cases, as we have seen. One of the clearest examples comes from Skye in 1920 when a group of crofters petitioned the Scottish Office in the following terms: ‘we have been promised the land, we fought for it, so we think we are now entitled to get it.’⁵³⁵ Crofters in Mull, were even more specific, arguing that the government had made ‘definite promises’ about settling ex-service men on new crofts.⁵³⁶ Even if promises were not made at the level of individual servicemen there is plenty of evidence that politicians used the circumstances of the war to heighten their rhetoric about the land question. The Lord Advocate, T.B. Morison, suggested that

If the effect of the war would be to solve our Highland land problem, let them make the most of the opportunity. Though they would do well to forget the bitterness of old controversies, let them not forget the lessons of past experiences and past mistakes, and let them aim at a land settlement on broad lines and on an extensive scale.⁵³⁷

⁵³⁴ *Oban Times*, 5 Jan. 1918, this issue also contains a report of a land raid at Ardmhor on Barra. Robertson, ‘Historical geography of social protest’, 144–5; the Oban and Lorn Division of the Highland Land League published a pamphlet about this case, see *Tiree Food Producers Sent to Prison at the Instance of the Duke of Argyll: Reports of the Proceedings in Oban Sheriff Court, April 6th and 13th 1918* (Oban, 1918).

⁵³⁵ NRS, AF67/157, Petition from Crofters of Torrinn, Skye, to Scottish Office, 16 Dec. 1921.

⁵³⁶ Ewen A. Cameron and Iain J.M. Robertson, ‘Fighting and bleeding for the land: the Scottish highlands and the Great War’, in Catriona M.M. MacDonald and E.W. McFarland (eds), *Scotland and the Great War* (East Linton, 1999), 93–4.

⁵³⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 5 Oct. 1917.

Although the post-war legislation of 1919 did not ‘solve’ the highland land question it did go much further than any of its predecessors in distributing land. Further, it contained an explicit reference to military service in that for the first few years of its operation it gave a preference to ex-servicemen in their applications for land.

A Lost Generation?

The Great War reacquainted British society with mass mortality through the unique scale of the conflict. The nature of recruiting and military organisation, especially in the early years of the war, ensured that the impact of losses would be localised. The practice of recruits from the same area serving together in the same unit was in 1914 and 1915 seen as an incentive to encourage enlistment.⁵³⁸ It meant that these men died together when their unit went into action and the impact on localities was profound. The shifting attitudes to death occasioned by the war were evident in the proliferation of memorials which followed the conflict. These were organised on a local and a national basis, topped off by the call for funds for Scottish National War Memorial, which was opened in 1927.⁵³⁹ Memorials took a variety of different forms: from the plaques issued to the families of the fallen to formal sculptures erected in prominent places. One interesting type of memorial, of which there is a particularly good example from Lewis and another from Shetland, was the Roll of Honour. This was an attempt to provide some biographical detail on those who had been killed. The overarching theme in the

⁵³⁸ ‘The Cameron Highlanders – Appeal by Lochiel, *Inverness Courier*, 28 Aug. 1914.

⁵³⁹ Jenny Macleod, ‘Memorials and Location: Local versus National Identity and the Scottish National War Memorial’, *Scottish Historical Review*, 89 (2010), 73–95; Jenny Macleod, “‘By Scottish Hands, with Scottish Money, on Scottish Soil’: the Scottish National War Memorial and National Identity”, *Journal of British Studies*, 49 (2010), 73–96.

memorials of the Great War is one of national sacrifice. The dead were volunteers, even those who were, in fact, conscripts. They came from all corners of the country and its social structure. The memorials of this period were devoid of triumphalism and tended to take the forms of shrines to the dead rather than proclamations of victory.

The question of war deaths is controversial and exaggerated claims have been made for the extent of Scotland's losses.⁵⁴⁰ Given the difficulties of analysing the numbers from Scotland it is impossible to identify with any certainty the precise extent of losses from the Highlands, except that they were significant. The deaths in battle were augmented by terrible events after the cessation of hostilities. Principal among these was the sinking of the yacht *The Iolaire* on the morning of 1 Jan 1919. This disaster resulted in the deaths of 205 Naval Reservists from Lewis and Harris who were returning home at the end of the war. Rev John MacLeod of Arnol, who later emigrated to Canada, described in a poem about the disaster how his father was found 'fuar bàthe air an tràigh' ('cold drowned on the beach') and of the devastating effect on his family.⁵⁴¹ This was one of the worst maritime disasters in British history and an event of truly tragic proportions on Lewis, the home of most of those who were drowned. Comment on the disaster made the link to the fact that Lewis lost around 1000 men in the war but that the loss of the *Iolaire* was a tragedy of a different order:

⁵⁴⁰ J. M. Winter, 'Some aspects of the demographic consequences of the First World War in Britain', *Population Studies*, 30 (1976), 539–52; Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London, 1998), 298–9; Cameron, *Impaled on a Thistle*, 121–4.

⁵⁴¹ 'Bantach Cogaidh' ('War Widow'), Black (ed.), *An Tuil*, 410–13.

All the island's war losses of the past four cruel years – although these number fully four times the death roll of New Year's Day morning – are not comparable to this unspeakable calamity. The black tragedy has not a redeeming feature.⁵⁴²

When the Stornoway war memorial, funded by Lord Leverhulme, was unveiled in September 1924 it included the names of those who had perished on the *Iolaire* and covered the period from 1914 to 1919.⁵⁴³

Another World War

The Second World War was a less obvious arena for the deployment of symbols of highland militarism than had been the Great War. The kilt was less prominent on the battlefield than in 1914 to 1918. Indeed, the War Office instructions that the garment be used on ceremonial occasions led the Gordon Highlanders to burn a kilt in protest. The Highland Societies began a campaign, arguing that it was inimical to Scottish economic interests as well as the morale of and recruiting to the kilted regiments.⁵⁴⁴ Further, the disasters of the early years of the war had particular resonance in the highlands. The rescue of British forces from Dunkirk in 1940 was a particular disaster in the Highlands. The 51st Division, which contained most of the Highland regiments, was the only British unit which did not escape. Its capture by General Rommel at St Valery was a bleak event for the north of Scotland and consigned many men from that region to a grim existence in

⁵⁴² *Stornoway Gazette*, 10 Jan. 1919, 5; see also the editorial on p. 4 of the same issue and the 'Pulpit references' on p.2; John MacLeod, *When I Heard the Bell: The Loss of the Iolaire* (Edinburgh, 2009) and an important article by the same author, 'The sea of sorrow', *The Herald Magazine*, 2 Jan. 1999, 7–10. Also evident on the same pages of the *Gazette* are deaths from the Spanish flu pandemic which further compounded the mortality of the Great War.

⁵⁴³ Hutchison, *Soap Man*, 221–2

⁵⁴⁴ *Scotsman*, 15 Dec. 1939, 9; 16 Feb 1940, 9

POW camps for the remainder of the war.⁵⁴⁵ Symbols and activity related to Scottishness helped to sustain the captives during their ordeal; in Stalag 383 near Munich they formed a St Andrews Society and a branch of An Comunn Gàidhealach.⁵⁴⁶ The 51st Division was reformed and fought in North Africa, Sicily and in Northern Europe after the invasion of 1944. In a highly symbolic act the division liberated St Valery in September 1944 and in June 1950 a memorial was raised to record the men who fell in 1940. It has a Gaelic inscription: ‘Là a’ bhlàir ‘s math na càirdean’ (‘Friends are good in the day of battle’).⁵⁴⁷ The figure who ensured that the Division maintained its identity was General Douglas Wimberley who commanded the division from June 1941 to 1943. Wimberley was well aware of the traditions of the highland regiments as he was born in Inverness in 1896 and had served with the QOCH on the Western Front in 1915, winning the Military Cross.⁵⁴⁸ The recreation of this Division ensured that the highland regiments had considerable visibility in the main theatres of conflict during the Second World War. The soldiers took advantage of this through their practice of painting the Divisional symbol at locations where they had triumphed, thereby becoming known as the ‘Highway Decorators’. The Division was prominent, with kilts and pipe bands, in an extraordinary victory parade in Tripoli in March 1943 in the presence of Montgomery and a lachrymose Churchill who ‘witnessed the magnificent entry of the eighth Army through its stately streets. At their

⁵⁴⁵ Saul David, *Churchill's Sacrifice of the Highland Division, France 1940* (London, 1994).

⁵⁴⁶ J. B. Salmond, *The History of the 51st Highland Division, 1939–45* (Edinburgh, 1953), 18.

⁵⁴⁷ Richard Doherty, *None Bolder: The History of the 51st Highland Division in the Second World War* (Stroud, 2006); Patrick Delaforce, *Monty's Highlanders: 51st Division in the Second World War* (Barnsley, 2007).

⁵⁴⁸ Timothy Harrison Place, ‘Wimberley, Douglas Neil (1896–1983)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/63740>, accessed 26 April 2013]

head were the pipers of the 51st Highland Division. Spick and span they looked after all their marching and fighting’.⁵⁴⁹

One eighth army soldier produced some of the most significant poetry of the Second World War. Sorley MacLean had been in the army since September 1940 and his work from this period includes reflections on death, both of comrades and enemies, on the battlefield. In *Curaidhean* he wrote movingly of the heroism of an unlikely hero – Fear beag truagh le gruaidhean pluiceach ... (A poor little chap with chubby cheeks...). This poem uses specifically military slang of the period (‘deannal’ translated as ‘biff’) to describe the shot which killed the Englishman. Although MacLean used the conventions of traditional martial themes in Gaelic poetry it has also been suggested that he used the North-African place names and references to the landscape and conditions of the desert ‘to create a sense of dislocation’ between his Gaelic readers and the conflict in which he was engaged.⁵⁵⁰ An encounter with a German corpse led him to reflect on whether this soldier was complicit in Nazi anti-semitism or whether he had been led to war ‘air sgàth uachdaran?’ (for the sake of rulers?). Some of his closest friends, not least Douglas Young, refused to be conscripted but MacLean’s detestation of fascism outweighed his criticism of the British empire and he joined up. In a letter to Hugh MacDiarmid he argued that his position as a soldier in the British army was defensible only in the sense that a victory for the British Empire was the outcome likely to do least harm, certainly in comparison with a victory for Nazi Germany. He admitted that this position brought him

⁵⁴⁹ Jeremy Crang, ‘The Second World War’ in Edward M. Spiers, Jeremy A. Crang and Matthew J. Strickland (eds), *A Military History of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2012), 571–85 contains an excellent account of the 51st with good illustrations; see also Salmond, *51st Highland Division*, 73; Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War, Volume IV, The Hinge of Fate* (London, 1951), 645.

⁵⁵⁰ Peter MacKay, *Sorley MacLean* (Aberdeen, 2010), 132–3.

into ‘very bad company politically’. This was also a theme in MacLean’s war poetry in which soldiers of both sides were presented as ‘cogs in the wheel of a power struggle between rulers’. A critic has suggested that MacLean’s position as an ‘impure conscript who is torn between his need to fight fascism and his communist principles ... is largely unique in World War II poetry’.⁵⁵¹ Until the crushing of the Polish uprising in 1944 he adopted a conventional Communist position of support for the Soviet Union and the Red Army.⁵⁵² His association with MacDiarmid brought him to the attention of the security services. The police in Portree were asked to report on his activities. It was the threat of Scottish nationalism, rather than Communism, that concerned the authorities but Inspector MacGillivray of Portree reported that he was ‘reasonably sure’ that MacLean ‘was a loyal British subject’ and that his family bore ‘excellent characters’.⁵⁵³

Another important Gaelic poet of the Second World War was George Campbell Hay. He had adopted a nationalist position by refusing conscription on the grounds that he did not want to fight in England’s war. At his tribunal he said he would consent to do agricultural work or serve against direct invaders of Scotland.⁵⁵⁴ He went on the run in an attempt to avoid being called up. He gave himself up in Argyll in May 1941 in order to bring to an end the authorities’ pressure on his family. He joined the army in an administrative position and served in Tunisia, Algeria, Italy and Macedonia where he had the seminal

⁵⁵¹ Emma Dymock, *The Poetry of Sorley MacLean* (Glasgow, 2011), 56.

⁵⁵² Susan R. Wilson, *The Correspondence Between Hugh MacDiarmid and Sorley MacLean* (Edinburgh, 2010), 186, 192–3, (letters of MacLean, 25 May 1940 and 8 Mar. 1941); see also Raymond J. Ross, ‘Marx, MacDiarmid and MacLean’, in Raymond J. Ross and Joy Hendry (eds), *Sorley MacLean: Critical Essays* (Edinburgh, 1986), 91–108.

⁵⁵³ TNA, KV2/2010, William MacGillivray to Chief Constable, Inverness-shire Constabulary, 4 Apr. 1941 (this letter comes from the Security Service file on Grieve).

⁵⁵⁴ Michel Byrne, ‘Bàrdachd Mhic Iain Dheòrsa: the original poetry of George Campbell Hay’, PhD thesis (University of Edinburgh, 1992), 22.

interactions with Arabic and Greek culture which influenced his post-war writing. In Macedonia, however, he experienced the trauma which destroyed his health and mental equilibrium. Compared to the visceral experiences of MacLean or some of the poets from the Great War, Campbell Hay was distanced from the action. He was an ‘onlooker’ rather than a ‘participant’ or the author of ‘soldier’s poetry’, a status which provided him with clarity on the horror of war and the injustice of the visitation of its consequences on those caught in the cross-fire.⁵⁵⁵ His observations of wartime landscapes can be seen in some of his works from this period, such as ‘Biserta’. This searing poem about a town in Tunisia caught in the cross-fire between the Allies and the Germans may have raised the possible fate of his own country in a war which, in his view, was not relevant to its concerns. ‘An t-Òigear a’ Bruidhinn on Ùir’ (‘The Young Man Speaking from the Grave’), from 1945, draws on what he had seen of the aftermath of battle in the different countries in which he had served:

Seall am fonn a dh’òl ar lotan

Air a threabhadh leis a chanan.

...

Seall smùr nam baile pronn sa Eadailt

‘S nan clachan leagte thall san Aifric,

Duslach mìn nan taighean marbha,

Stur armailt air uaigh nan dachaigh.

⁵⁵⁵ Byrne, ‘Bàrdachd Mhic Iain Dheòrsa’, 92–3 contains a penetrating discussion of the ‘war poems’.

(See the land that swallowed us/Ploughed by the cannon ... See the dust of the crushed towns in Italy/And of the villages overthrown in Africa,/The fine dust of the dead houses,/The stour of armies on the graves of homes.)⁵⁵⁶

These reflections on the effect of the war on the landscape of countries which had the misfortune to be theatres of conflict raise the issue of the impact of the war on Scotland. One of the main differences between the experience of the Great War and the Second World War was the impact of the conflict on the territory of the UK. In some areas of Scotland, especially Clydebank, this took the form of the dreadful experience of destructive bombing. Although the highlands did not have to undergo this trauma there was a highly distinctive home front experience during the Second World War. It could be argued that the use by the state of the highland landscape for war-related activities was merely part of the national mobilisation of resources and was no different from the exploitation of forests or the relocation of industry from areas where it might be endangered from bombing. Nevertheless, there were three particular forms of state intervention that were distinctive in their application to the highlands.

The first was the fact that the entire area north and west of the Great Glen was defined as a 'protected' area and a permit was required to enter it from the outside. There were other areas, particularly around the coasts, or close to important military installations, which were also deemed to be 'protected'; enemy aliens were removed from these areas and access was controlled. Nevertheless, the vast highland protected area – with its sparse

⁵⁵⁶ Michel Byrne (ed.), *Collected Poems and Songs of George Campbell Hay (Deòrsa Mac Iain Dheòrsa)* (Edinburgh, 2003), 176–7, 191, 593, 596.

population, long coastline, many islands, numerous ports and landing places as well as a not inconsiderable railway network – was both qualitatively and quantitatively different from other protected areas. The nature of life in the protected area became a topic of resentment in the highlands. There were complaints that permits were difficult to get and that the tourist trade – which might otherwise have had considerable potential given the impossibility of travel in Europe – had been ‘killed stone dead by the restrictions’. Some County Councillors felt that there was an inequality of wartime economic sacrifice represented in the operation of the ‘protected area’ in ‘one of the poorest districts in the British Isles’.⁵⁵⁷ This was the subject of political representations to the government by a group representing a diverse range of highland opinion: from landowners to members of the HDL. The former were worried that sporting estates were unlettable and that this would cause hardship for landowners who would lose rental income and local authorities reliant on local taxation from these subjects. Other industries, such as pastoral agriculture, slate quarrying and tourism were at a standstill and, except for aluminium production, there was no compensating war-related industry as there was in the lowlands. Overall, there was a feeling that the region was suffering from over-centralisation:

It appears as though everything is now controlled from London without the slightest knowledge of, or regard for the interests of the Highlands, which were decimated in the last war, and whose population has declined ever since. Today

⁵⁵⁷ *Scotsman*, 27 Feb. 1940, 7; 28 Feb. 1940, 7; 3 May 1940, 9; 8 May 1940, 7; 18 Oct 1940, 3.

the Highlands are mainly inhabited by old people, and unless there is a radical change in Government policy, there will be no hope for future generations.⁵⁵⁸

Although there was a degree of highland exceptionalism in these complaints they were of a piece with wider Scottish dissatisfaction with the impact of the war on domestic life and the economy.⁵⁵⁹ It was this querulous atmosphere which provided Thomas Johnston with the context to act in a populist manner as the defender of Scottish interests during his time as the Secretary of State for Scotland from 1941 to 1945. The creation of the Hydro-Board was the principal effect of this in the highlands, although the tangible benefits to the region were not manifest until after the war.

The second point is that there was considerable military activity in the north of Scotland, especially after the relocation of the fleet to the coast of Wester Ross from Scapa Flow in Orkney after the sinking of HMS Royal Oak. More distinctive, however, was the fact that substantial areas of the landscape of the western part of Inverness-shire were used for training of special forces. The most famous example of this theme is the use of Achnacarry Castle, near Spean Bridge, and its surrounding landscape for the training of Commando forces. This was, however, only one of a number of examples of use of the landscape and coastline of western Inverness-shire for the training of special and covert forces of various kinds. Indeed, this provided an important connection between the Highlands and some of the most important events of the War. In May 1942 two Czech

⁵⁵⁸ NLS, Lachlan Grant Mss, Acc. 12187/13, f. 159, 'The Highlands and the War'; f. 136, Cameron of Lochiel to Grant, 25 Mar. 1940.

⁵⁵⁹ Cameron, *Impaled on a Thistle*, 183–4; Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain, 1939–45* (London, 1969), 333; Sonya Rose, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Britain, 1939–45* (Oxford, 2003), 225–8.

soldiers who had been trained in the west Highlands, at Camusdaroch, near Arisaig, attempted the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, the brutal Nazi chief in Bohemia-Moravia. Although the mission did not go according to plan the injuries inflicted resulted in Heydrich's death from blood poisoning eight days later. The assassins were later cornered and killed, as were other men who had been trained in the West Highlands. Nazi anger resulted in hideous reprisals in the days following Heydrich's death, especially in Lidice where mass executions took place prior to the razing of the village.⁵⁶⁰ Operations such as this were highly controversial because of the scope for German reprisals but SOE and other agencies were very active in western Inverness-shire for the duration of the war.

A prominent local landowner and military figure, Simon Fraser, Lord Lovat, was allegedly central in the identification of this district as suitable for a special training centre. Not only was it inside the protected area but, according to the principal historian of these matters, it was

an area with all the natural advantages of rugged country and broken coastline suitable for fieldcraft and survival training, and for learning small-boat work and assault landing techniques. It offered isolation and low population density conducive to security and indeed to public safety when live firing was brought to

⁵⁶⁰ Robert Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman: The Life of Heydrich* (New Haven, 2011), 1–11, 283–5; Stuart Allan, *Commando Country* (Edinburgh, 2007), 182–4.

bear, and it had the important asset of proximity to the west highland railway whereby trainees and supplies could be delivered and despatched.⁵⁶¹

In addition to Camusdaroch and Traigh, training was undertaken at Inverailort and SOE also retained Inverlair house near Loch Treig. The latter, the subject of lurid local speculation concerning firing squads and the presence of Rudolf Hess, was used for personnel who had not completed their training but had learned too much about covert operations to be immediately returned to normal duties. They were given useful tasks to carry out, these included repairing footwear from SOE's other training facilities in the region and operating a small iron foundry utilising the scrap metal which was a plentiful legacy of the construction of hydro schemes for the aluminium smelter at Fort William.⁵⁶²

In addition to SOE activity, Sir Donald Cameron of Lochiel's family seat at Achnacarry was requisitioned in 1940 and became the base for the famously tough training course for members of the new 'Commando' force. Aside from Achnacarry, it is striking that the infrastructure which the state took advantage of during the Second World War was essentially that of the sporting estate. Although this was the second unintended military consequence of the sporting economy – after the formation of the Lovat Scouts in 1899 – critics of deer forests were not appeased. It is striking that Lovat and others deeply involved in the sporting economy of the highlands were implicated not only in the selection of venues for this training but also in the creation of the ethos which it sought to impart. As Stuart Allan has argued:

⁵⁶¹ Lord Lovat, *March Past: A Memoir* (London, 1978), 173–8; Allan, *Commando Country*, 37.

⁵⁶² Christopher J. Murphy, *Security and Special Operations: SOE and MI5 during the Second World War* (Houndmills, 2006), 25–40.

the influence of highland sporting culture in the special training centres was not limited to the practical matter of applying the skills of hunting and highland fieldcraft to the requirements of military training. It lent something of its values to the idea of training as initiation, testing men against the challenge of the environment in order to develop and assess their fitness as individuals for the new, self-defining elite of special service. The ability to read and cover difficult ground undetected by the quarry, care and skill with weapons, willingness to take responsibility for the clean kill and not shirk its visceral aftermath, all this had a moral and ascetic as well as a practical dimension.⁵⁶³

The Achnacarry course was the subject of myth-making in the post-war years. The primary text in this movement is a volume by one of the leaders of the course, Donald Gilchrist. One of the carefully constructed anecdotes which he recounts in this volume is a story of a group of Commandoes on a ‘speed march’ from Achnacarry who engaged in some hunting of their own:

Before setting out, we held a private conference. The countryside around the castle abounded with game. Why not have a crack at some of it? ... I had visions of a magnificent stag’s head adorning the hall of my household.

⁵⁶³ Stuart Allan, ‘Commando country: special training centres in the Scottish highlands, 1940–5’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2011, 45.

Once the stag had been shot the anecdote recounts a change of attitude on the part of the group:

The thrill of the hunter had been replaced by – the stigma of the poacher! This was Lochaber. Cameron country. Everything belonged to the Camerons, whether it grew out of the ground, ran about on top of it, or flew in the air above it. Lochiel and his ghillies might have something to say about a deer being murdered by a bunch of trigger-happy trainee Commando officers.⁵⁶⁴

This was a subtle repackaging of the culture of deer stalking for a slightly different audience and more demotic purpose in a post-war period perhaps less in tune with the aristocratic values of 1930s sportsmen. The experience of the brutalities of the Second World War had done much to undermine such a view. The Czech partisans in Prague and the villagers of Lidice in the aftermath of Heydrich's assassination were treated according to an entirely different code.

The remoteness of the highlands and the fact that it was covered by protected-area status also allowed the state to use the landscape for a third and even more sinister purpose. The clearest example of state-exploitation of deliberately augmented 'remoteness' was the biological warfare experiments on the island of Gruinard, Wester Ross. In the summer of 1942 and again in September 1943 experiments, including dropping bombs from Wellington bombers, were conducted to test the effects of anthrax on specially imported sheep. The weapon was found to be highly effective and of considerable military

⁵⁶⁴ Donald Gilchrist, *Castle Commando* (Edinburgh, 1960), 32–3.

potential, despite the ban on biological warfare since 1925. The island had been leased and then purchased and considerable efforts were made to maintain the secrecy of the experiments. Problems arose later in 1943, however, when the carcass of a sheep from the island was washed up on the mainland, possibly after being blasted off the island by the explosive force of the bombs used! Subsequent deaths of sheep, cattle and domestic animals raised local concerns about what had taken place on Gruinard. The authorities were presented with a problem: how to allay the fears of the locals and settle demands for compensation without the true nature of the experiments becoming known. Payments were indeed made to local crofters, although they were not defined as compensation, the experiments ceased, the island was declared to be contaminated and access was closed off. The nature of the contamination became known in 1966 and Gruinard was not deemed to be safe and returned to private ownership until 1990.⁵⁶⁵

The Cold War and Beyond

The use of the landscape for military purposes established a theme which continued during the Cold War. During peacetime, however, the issues were contested to a greater degree. The remoteness of parts of the highlands continued to lend itself to use by the state for military purposes. In 1955 it was announced that the Ministry of Defence was to establish a 'rocket range' on South Uist. Crofter opposition to this proposal emerged, the most vocal came from those who were to lose land as a result of the building of the range. Consideration of these resumption cases resulted in an extraordinary sitting of the

⁵⁶⁵ Elizabeth A. Willis, 'Landscape with dead sheep: what they did to Gruinard Island', *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, 18 (2002), 199–210; Elizabeth A. Willis, 'Contamination and Compensation: Gruinard as a "menace to the mainland"', *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, 20 (2004), 334–43; Robert Harris and Jeremy Paxman, *A Higher Form of Killing: The Secret History of Chemical and Biological Warfare* (London, 2002), 71.

Scottish Land Court in April 1957. The application of the Air Ministry was granted and the crofters were compensated, bringing to an end one aspect of the opposition to the range. This was a striking clash between crofting tenure and cold war strategic considerations.⁵⁶⁶ The principal figure in organising the campaign against the range and for ensuring publicity was the local Roman Catholic Priest, Father John Morrison. He developed the argument, taken up in parliament by Malcolm MacMillan (MP for the Western Isles), that the range would bring limited economic benefit and some moral dangers to the people of South Uist.⁵⁶⁷ At one point he threatened to lead an emigration party to Canada in opposition to the plans. In fact, in the late 1950s and 1960s the range was used to test the ‘Corporal’ missile system which had been purchased from the USA. This weapon was inaccurate and unreliable and in 1966 a test in Uist went badly wrong when a missile went out of control. Disaster was only narrowly avoided and the ‘Corporal’ came to rest in a loch.⁵⁶⁸ This event was the subject of satirical poetry in Gaelic by a local bard Dhomhnall Iain MacDhòmhnaill.

It was a rocket, what a rocket

It truly was a rocket –

Though it set off from the machair

It was not long returning;

What a panic there was

⁵⁶⁶ Keith Graham, ‘The rocket-range cases’, in *No Ordinary Court: 100 Years of the Scottish Land Court* (Edinburgh, 2012), 111–21; Neal Ascherson, *Stone Voices: The Search for Scotland* (London, 2003), 196–8; the episode provided Compton MacKenzie with material for a novel, *Rockets Galore* (London, 1957) a film version of which was released in the same year.

⁵⁶⁷ Angus Peter Campbell, ‘Father Rocket – twenty years on’, *West Highland Free Press*, 16 Feb 1979, 3.

⁵⁶⁸ Fraser MacDonald, ‘Geopolitics and the “vision thing”: regarding Britain and America’s first nuclear missile’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, new ser., 31 (2006), 53–71.

Amongst the men down below

When they heard it rushing

Straight down to earth

B’e rocaid, b’e rocaid I,

B’e rocaid I ga-rìbh –

Ged dh’fhalbh I far a’ mhachaire

Cha bhada gus na thill i;

Sin far an robh a’ starram

Aig na fearibh bha gu h-iseal

Nuair dh’fhaireach iad a still

‘S I tighinn dìreach gu làr

This poem deals with the way that ‘boasting and bluster (Bha boast-bha ann is bòilich) by the army hierarchy was punctured by technological failure. The military were made to look foolish by the technological malfunction and this was presented as a defeat occasioning a retreat.⁵⁶⁹

This was but one example of the way in which the highlands were an important Cold War landscape a ‘*place d’armes*’.⁵⁷⁰ Another was in the reaction of Gaelic writers to the

⁵⁶⁹ *Chì Mi: I See. Domhnall Iain MacDhòmhnaill: The Gaelic Poetry of John MacDonald*, ed. Bill Innes (Edinburgh, 1998), 232–3.

⁵⁷⁰ John Erickson, ‘Scotland’s defence commitment: some problems of cost, capability and effectiveness’, in J.N. Wolfe (ed.), *Government and Nationalism in Scotland: An Enquiry by Members of the University of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1969), 72; see also, Alex Law, ‘Melting the Cold War permafrost: restructuring the military industry in Scotland’, *Antipode*, 31 (1999), 421–52.

conditions created in this period. Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna, whose Great War poetry we have looked at, contrasted his experiences in that conflict with the prospect of nuclear conflict after the testing of the first H-Bomb in the early 1950s. He noted that when he was wounded at The Somme in 1916 he was picked up by ‘Gillean èasgaidh leis a chròileab’ (agile lads with the stretcher) and his wounds were tended to. A nuclear war, however, would permit no such humanitarianism:

Thèid gach duine ‘s brùid a thàrradh

‘S thèid gach càil a smàladh còmhla;

Cha bhi nì air bith air fhàgail

Eadar tràigh is àird na mòintich,

(Each man and beast will be caught/And everything snuffed out together;/Nothing at all will be left/Between ebb and highest moorland,)⁵⁷¹

This can be contrasted with Calum MacNeacail’s ‘Cùmhnantan Sithe Pharis’ (The Paris Peace Treaties) which deals with the post-war conference of 1946 which described Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, as ‘Tha aon fhear lao than mallaichte,’ (One man’s with them who’s cursed,) and wished for his destruction by a nuclear bomb, ‘Sbheir sin gu fois a ghairm’ (that will silence his call).⁵⁷²

⁵⁷¹ Black (ed.), *An Tuil*, 144–5.

⁵⁷² Black (ed.), *An Tuil*, 242–3.

The importance of the North Atlantic in the strategic considerations of the day meant that locations even more remote than South Uist, such as St Kilda and even Rockall, were used for weapons testing and surveillance purposes. The distance between the Outer Hebrides and the main centres of the UK made them attractive for military experimental purposes; although, as we have seen, crofting tenure provided an obstacle to military appropriation. Indeed, Rockall was formally annexed in 1955 in order to prevent Soviet counter surveillance of the flights of the rockets launched from South Uist.⁵⁷³ Further biological weapons testing took place in the sea off Lewis in 1952 and 1953 and involved the inadvertent contamination of a trawler crew whose vessel strayed into the testing zone.⁵⁷⁴ By the 1980s the highland landscape was studded with military infrastructure and some areas, especially Benbecula and South Uist, were profoundly affected by the presence of army and Air-force personnel. St Kilda, which had been evacuated of its native population in 1930, was occupied by the military from 1957 onwards and in the 1970s huge sums were spent on providing modern facilities to make their lives more comfortable. Perhaps the principal site of contest during the later part of the Cold War was the NATO air base at Stornoway. The MoD took over the airfield from the CAA in 1973 and its extension was opposed by Western Isles Council and a pressure group called 'Keep Nato Out' which voiced the objections of islanders to the militarization of the landscape without their consent.⁵⁷⁵ With these developments the relationship between the British state and the highlands in military affairs had come full circle. In the aftermath of

⁵⁷³ Fraser MacDonald, 'The last outpost of empire: Rockall and the Cold War', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 32 (2006), 627–47.

⁵⁷⁴ Elizabeth A. Willis, 'Seascape with monkeys and guinea pigs: Britain's biological weapons research programme, 1948–54', *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, 19 (2003), 285–302.

⁵⁷⁵ Malcolm Spaven, *Fortress Scotland: A Guide to the Military Presence* (London, 1983), 49, 63, 65, 82, 89–90.

Culloden the populous nature of the region presented a military opportunity for the developing British state. In the nineteenth century the increasingly depopulated nature of the landscape presented problems in the recruiting drives of the 1850s but by the late twentieth century the emptiness of the landscape presented opportunities for the state in the midst of the Cold War.

Chapter Seven

Language and People

Although the history of Gaelic as a spoken language since the census of 1881 is one of decline the extent of the forces arrayed against it suggest that its survival is worthy of remark: ‘if Gaelic has been a “dying language” it has tenaciously resisted its oppressors’.⁵⁷⁶ **Although there were very negative attitudes to Gaelic inherited from the eighteenth century, not least its association with dangerous religious and political ideas as well as poverty and backwardness, there were additional emphases in the late nineteenth century. This was related to prevailing attitudes to race, a subject which was almost all-pervasive in social discussions in the period. Race and language was closely associated, both by those who sought to demean the Celts and by their defenders. For the latter group attitudes to Gaelic became a proxy for attitudes to highlanders in general. The clarity of this view was disturbed in the 1880s when there was widespread sympathy for the social and economic plight of the crofters and even for their political activities but it did not lead to a significant reappraisal of the place of the language spoken by most of them.**⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁶ Kenneth MacKinnon, *Gaelic: A Past and Future Prospect* (Edinburgh, 1991), 16.

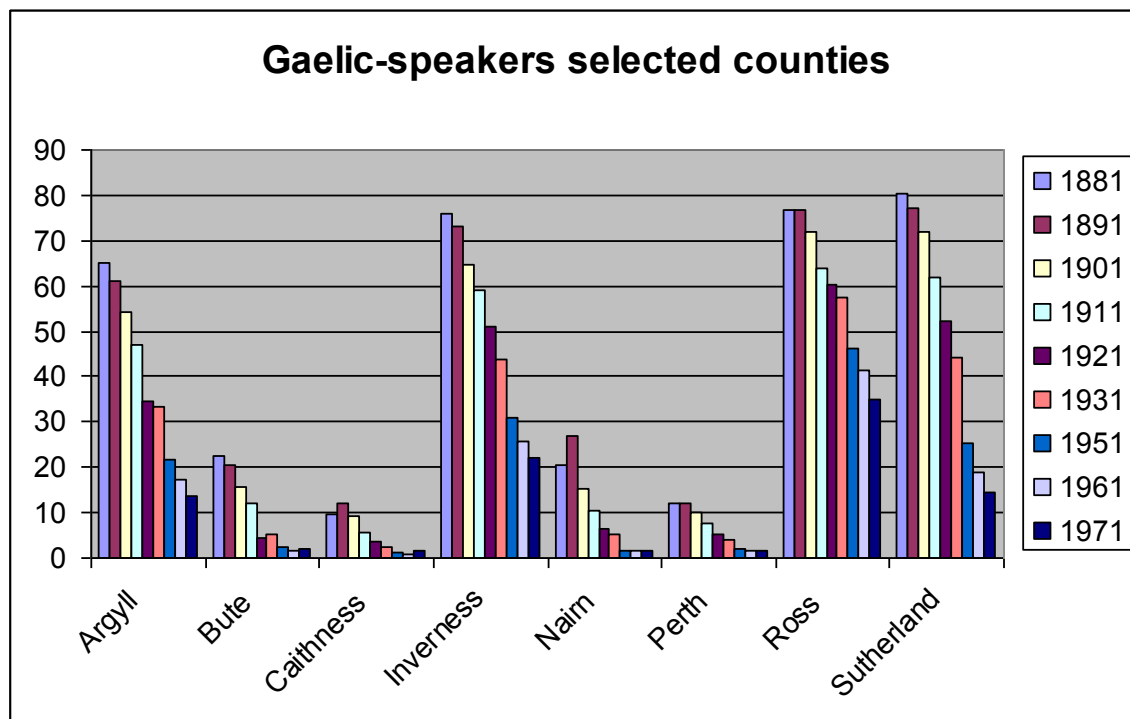
⁵⁷⁷ Colin Kidd, ‘Teutonic ethnology and Scottish nationalist inhibition, 1780–1880’, *Scottish Historical Review*, 74 (1995), 45–68; Colin Kidd, ‘Race, empire and the limits of nineteenth-century Scottish nationhood’, *Historical Journal*, 46 (2003), 873–92; as in the 1840s, however, there was an element of this sympathy which was patronising; see Krisztina Fenyő, *Contempt, Sympathy and Romance: Lowland Perceptions of the Highlands and the Clearances During the Famine Years, 1845–1855* (East Linton, 2000), 3–6, 99–159.

Most studies have been based on the census since the question about Gaelic was first posed in 1881. A degree of care has to be taken as the nature of the question has changed since 1881 and the local authority boundaries have shifted, making comparison over time a complicated matter. Further, the state of knowledge about Gaelic in the years before 1881 is based on sources which are apparently less comprehensive and empirically rigorous than the census. Studies of the pre-1881 period show that the Gaelic-speaking area was not stable, that the intensity of language use varied within it and that alongside undoubted decline of Gaelic speaking along the southern boundary of the Gaidhealtachd there were also areas, such as at the eastern tip of the Black Isle where the use of Gaelic increased over the course of the eighteenth century. This was due to in-migration of Gaels attracted by economic opportunity, this was also evident in some areas of Caithness, where the fishing industry brought in Gaels to an otherwise English-speaking environment.⁵⁷⁸

The census of 1881, and especially the better-prepared work done from 1891, began to show a more complex picture. If the figures are first of all considered at county level the picture seems very clear indeed.

⁵⁷⁸ Charles W.J. Withers, 'The geographical extent of Gaelic in Scotland, 1698–1806', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 97 (1981), 130–9; E. G. Ravenstein, 'On the Celtic languages in the British Isles: a statistical survey', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 42 (1879), 593.

	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931	1951	1961	1971
Argyll	65.25	60.88	54.35	47.06	34.56	33.17	21.69	17.2	13.72
Bute	22.7	20.34	15.71	12.02	4.57	5.17	2.28	1.64	1.9
Caithness	9.48	11.96	9.16	5.62	3.76	2.59	1.25	0.9	1.55
Inverness	75.99	73.24	64.85	59.07	50.91	43.97	30.75	25.91	22.02
Nairn	20.32	27.07	15.29	10.54	6.47	5.19	1.69	1.79	1.64
Perth	12.1	11.95	9.94	7.7	5.25	4.21	1.9	1.53	1.68
Ross	76.57	76.92	71.76	64.01	60.2	57.29	46.05	41.31	35.12
Sutherland	80.4	77.1	71.75	61.75	52.25	44.05	25.26	18.83	14.51



This overall pattern of decline hides a significant degree of regional variation. At the margins the vast majority of Gaelic speakers in Bute were on the island of Arran, those in Nairn in Strath Dearn, those in Ross and Inverness in the west of the county and those in Perth in the rural areas of that county to the north of Dunkeld around where the southern

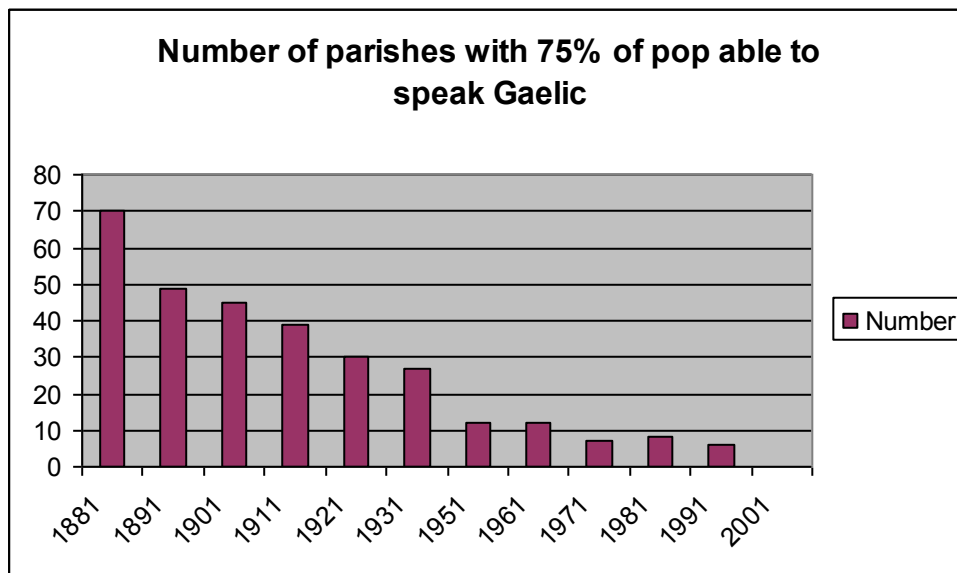
boundary of significant incidence of the language could be found in the Victorian period. The Hebrides formed the heartland of the Gaelic-speaking population of Scotland. Perhaps less obvious is the fact that Sutherland was the most Gaelic of all the highland counties in the early years of the census. The decline in Sutherland from this position of apparent strength was precipitate, especially in the twenty years from 1931. Even within this county there were marked variations. In the north and west the language was associated with older members of the crofting communities that were created in the nineteenth century as a result of the clearances. In the east Gaelic lasted longest among the members of the fishing communities. These communities were also a product of the clearances and the survival of Gaelic was, in turn, a product of the strict segregation of the fisherfolk from the wider community. The extent to which they were considered as an inferior group led to a perception of the language as less than respectable and its widespread abandonment in the wider community.⁵⁷⁹ The 1881 census underestimated the number of Gaelic speakers, so the figure of 80.4 per cent for the proportion of Gaelic speakers in Sutherland ought to be seen in that context.⁵⁸⁰ The rapidity and extent of the contraction in Gaelic in Sutherland is closely connected to the population loss and economic dislocation experienced in that county, especially in the period since the end of the Great War. Depopulation of the kind experienced in Sutherland in the post-war period was devastating for Gaelic. As young people left and the population aged there was little or no prospect of in which the language could flourish. As early as 1921 there were only

⁵⁷⁹ Nancy C. Dorian, *Language Death: The Life Cycle of a Scottish Gaelic Dialect* (Philadelphia, 1981), 48–73; Nancy C. Dorian, 'Linguistic lag as an ethnic marker', *Language and Society*, 9 (1980), 33–41.

⁵⁸⁰ Charles W.J. Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland, 1698–1981: The Geographical History of a Language* (Edinburgh, 1984), 209–33.

two parishes in the county which had more than 75 per cent of their population able to speak Gaelic and by 1951 there were none.⁵⁸¹

The intensity of language use is difficult to realise in statistical form but if we consider 75 per cent of a given population able to speak Gaelic as the requirement for its survival as a language of day-to-day communication a clear picture emerges, as can be seen from the following graph:



The pattern of retreat is similar to that for the language as a whole. In 1881 there were thirty-nine mainland parishes with more than 75 per cent of the population able to speak Gaelic. By 1911 this had declined to sixteen while only one island parish had dropped out of this category. By 1961 only insular parishes met this test and after this the last parishes

⁵⁸¹ Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 212, 230–2; Professor Withers makes a distinction between parishes of relatively high and relatively low population density in measuring the use of the language, this emphasises the point that the language has declined through processes of migration of Gaelic speakers from the highlands as well as cessation or diminution of use of the language in the highlands.

to hang on were Kilmuir in north Skye and areas of Harris and Lewis. The census statistics have been analysed further to make this point about intensity. It has been found that in 1881 67 per cent of Gaelic speakers lived in parishes where it was ‘likely to predominate in everyday speech encounters’, and 80 per cent lived in parishes where it was spoken by the majority of the population. By 2001 these measures had fallen to 8.1 per cent and 28.2 per cent of Gaelic speakers.⁵⁸²

Education

The 1872 Education (Scotland) Act was the culmination of a long controversy that had been rumbling on since the 1850s. Earlier attempts to reform the rickety Scottish education system foundered on the sectarian squabbles among the Presbyterian denominations and neglect of Scottish business in Parliament. The 1872 Act took the administration of the system away from the Established Church and placed it in the hands of a new structure of locally elected School Boards. The new system demanded compulsory attendance at school by children aged between five and thirteen but did not provide for free education.⁵⁸³

The absence of any mention of Gaelic in its provisions indicates that the language was neglected in official circles but also that there was little organised pressure on behalf of the language. The Gaelic Society of Inverness had been formed in 1871 but its initial interests were scholarly and philological, even sentimental. The early *Transactions* of the

⁵⁸² Kenneth MacKinnon, ‘Gaelic speakers by area of incidence, 1881–2001: numbers and proportions in areas of different intensity’, (SGRUD Research, 2007), accessed (16 Jun 2013) at <http://poileasaidh.celtscot.ed.ac.uk/>

⁵⁸³ Robert Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People, 1750–1918* (Oxford, 1995), 181–91; Robert Anderson, *Education and Opportunity in Victorian Scotland* (Oxford, 1983), 226–8.

Society give the impression of a movement interested in the preservation of material as the language died as a living entity.⁵⁸⁴ The perceived gaps in the 1872 Act, however, gave the nascent lobby on behalf of the language a focus for its work. The Act itself was concerned with educational administration rather than curricular issues. The details of what was to be taught in the schools administered by the new School Boards were dealt with in annual Education Codes produced by the Scotch Education Department (as it was known when it was set up in 1872). This issue focused the work of the Gaelic Society of Inverness and other organisations. Initial pressure was exerted by the Society but by 1875 only very minimal concessions had been extracted from the SED.

One of the problems in the late nineteenth century was a lack of reliable information on the demand for Gaelic education. Although the educational administration was no longer in the hands of the Churches, the clergy remained an important influence on the new elected School Boards. Few of these men were advocates of Gaelic teaching. There had long been a variety of problems in the delivery of education in the highlands. The principal issues were of funding and provision. The low value of land in the highlands meant that it generated very low rate income, the result was that the facilities were very poor and it was difficult to attract highly qualified and motivated teachers. This problem was exacerbated by the implications of wider social conditions. The poverty of the crofting communities, the relative improvement in the economy since the famine of the 1840s notwithstanding, meant that scholars attended only irregularly and this reduced the money available for teachers' salaries since they were partly dependant on fees from the pupils. A further problem was the difficulty of recruiting teachers who were able to teach

⁵⁸⁴ 'Introduction', *TGSI*, 1 (1871–2), xi.

Gaelic, this was, in turn, a consequence of minimal provision for Gaelic in the Universities and teacher-training (or 'Normal') colleges in Scotland. With these problems in mind the Privy Council organised an enquiry into the use of Gaelic in schools. This revealed that there was some demand for Gaelic teaching in the insular areas. The majority of School Boards supported a special grant for Gaelic teaching and, surprisingly, only fourteen boards admitted difficulty in recruiting teachers who were able to give lessons in Gaelic.⁵⁸⁵ This was seen by many as a surprisingly positive response from the School Boards in the highlands. Only very minimal concessions were granted by the government in the aftermath of this exercise. Gaelic was recognised by the Education Code but its teaching was not funded by any special grant until it was made a specific subject in 1885. This meant that teachers had to deliver the other standard areas of the curriculum, the subjects which would interest the Inspectorate, before they could turn to Gaelic.

It is striking that responsibility for implementing this modest change was devolved to the School Boards. This was the general policy of the SED in relation to Gaelic and it arose from their fear of compulsion. Power was devolved to the ratepayers who funded the School Boards and who elected their members. This was quite a broad electorate, much wider than that for parliamentary elections, and was based on a £4 franchise qualification that included women. This provided an opportunity for Gaelic activists to populate the School Boards and bring pressure to bear by that route. The leading Church of Scotland minister Rev Alexander MacGregor was clear on this point, arguing that it was 'imperative that the proper men are returned at the next election of School Boards, men

⁵⁸⁵ 'Gaelic in highland schools', *TGSI*, 7 (1877–8), 11–18.

pledged to have our native language taught in our own school, throughout the Highlands and Islands'.⁵⁸⁶ This was not easy. School Boards included representatives of estate management as well as the clergy, so there was a challenge for a crofter with an insecure tenancy. One particular issue arose in the Catholic areas of South Uist and Barra where the School Board was dominated by Protestants. It was not, however, until after the Crofters Act of 1886 that a challenge to this position was mounted and even then it was the local priest, Fr Allan McDonald, who put himself forward for election in order to move towards a more representative body with greater sympathy for the appointment of Catholic teachers.

One advantage for the Gaelic movement in this period was the presence of Charles Fraser Mackintosh in parliament as member for the Inverness Burghs. Fraser Mackintosh did much to raise the profile of the Gaelic language at Westminster. He was, however, like many in this period 'utilitarian' in his attitude.⁵⁸⁷ The language was defended on the grounds of scholarship or education; or as an aid for very young children to acquire the literacy required for learning English. One scholar has argued: 'virtually no one, with the exception of some members of *An Comunn* advocated the use of schools in an attempt to preserve the language'.⁵⁸⁸

Another Gaelic campaign of this period was to demand that the census of 1881 include an enumeration of the Gaelic speakers of Scotland. A linguistic question of

⁵⁸⁶ 'Great Celtic demonstration', *TGSI*, 7 (1877–8), 229.

⁵⁸⁷ William Gillies, 'A century of Gaelic scholarship', in William Gillies (ed.), *Gaelic and Scotland: Alba agus a' Ghaidhlig* (Edinburgh, 1989), 11.

⁵⁸⁸ V.E. Durkacz, 'Gaelic education in the nineteenth century', *Scottish Educational Studies*, 9 (1977), 27.

this kind had been part of the census of Ireland since 1861. Fraser Mackintosh was active in parliament on this question, asserting the orderly and peaceable nature of the highlanders compared to the Irish. The Gaelic Society of Inverness despatched a memorial to the Home Secretary and the concession was eventually granted very late in the day as far as the preparation of the census was concerned.⁵⁸⁹

The Napier Commission, of which Fraser Mackintosh was a member, considered the education question. Indeed, this was a very controversial matter in its deliberations. Other members of the Commission had an interest in the subject: Sheriff Alexander Nicolson. He had produced a report on education in the Hebrides for the Royal Commission on Scottish education chaired by the duke of Argyll in 1867.⁵⁹⁰ The Napier Report noted that the 1872 Act had imposed certain burdens on the highland population in order that the facilities demanded by the act were provided for by local taxation. The SED established the standard of school buildings required to qualify for further grants. Although it was emphasised that much had improved since 1872, especially in the levels of attendance, payment of fees and teachers' pay, problems remained.⁵⁹¹ The Napier Commission questioned whether a truly national education system could exist in Scotland given the prevailing conditions in the highlands:

The conditions of life for a family in the island of Heisker in the Outer Hebrides, or Foula in the Shetland Islands, are almost as different from those of a family in

⁵⁸⁹ *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Ser., 254, 2073–4; 257, 329; 260, 1636; 'The Gaelic Census', *TGSI*, 10 (1881–3), 51–2; *Celtic Magazine*, 6, no. 71, Sep. 1881, 438–41.

⁵⁹⁰ PP 1867, XXV, *Report on the State of Education in the Hebrides*.

⁵⁹¹ *Commission, Report*, 66, 69–73.

Midlothian or Middlesex, as if they lived in another hemisphere. The application to such places of the same rules, to entitle them to benefit from the national provision for education, as are suitable for densely populated localities of smaller area, would be unjust and absurd, and in point of fact is not done but further modification of these rules for the benefit of such places is still required, and more consideration of geographical facts.⁵⁹²

There was a circular problem to resolve in that incentives to attend were partly based on the quality of provision and that governed the eligibility for extra grant income. If the latter was not forthcoming the infrastructure would be less appealing and the incentive to attend would diminish, thereby reducing fee income.

There was also a controversial linguistic dimension to the education question in the highlands. There is some evidence to argue that the SED was not well disposed to Gaelic in the curriculum.⁵⁹³ At best it was regarded as a necessary evil in the early years as a means of inculcating literacy in the interests of learning English. The Napier Commission asserted that the ‘educational use of Gaelic should be not only permitted but enjoined and that its teaching should attract grants. Nevertheless, the report also articulated deeply held attitudes:

The first object of all the educational machinery set agoing in the highlands at the public expense is to enable every child as soon as possible to speak, read and

⁵⁹² *Commission, Report*, 69.

⁵⁹³ Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People*, 183–4, 216–17.

write the English language correctly; and the question is, can that be done efficiently, in the case of a child who hears and speaks nothing but Gaelic at home, without making any use of the only language the child understands.⁵⁹⁴

The SED consulted the Inspectorate over the Napier proposals and the response was hostile. Sheriff Nicolson, who had written this section of the report, was deemed to be partisan. The further point was made that not much of the evidence heard by the Commissioners touched on education and that given by Murdoch and Blackie did not impress the Inspectors. It was the suggestion that the highlands merited special treatment that most irritated the SED. Officials did not see the highlands as being educationally disadvantaged. They argued that the tide of ‘social progress was operating steadily and positively’, through contact with the lowlands by means of trade and migration, to move the highlander out of a Gaelic-speaking world, both mentally physically. It was concluded

That the Education Act is to be, what may be called the voluntary eviction act of the future, is a belief firmly held by all intelligent residents in the North and many of the present unfortunate complications would probably have been avoided had the education Act been passed ten years sooner.⁵⁹⁵

If the Inspector was referring to the Crofters Wars of the 1880s in the phrase ‘unfortunate complications’ then this is an interesting point of view. Many would argue that increasing

⁵⁹⁴ *Commission, Report*, 78.

⁵⁹⁵ NRS, ED7/1/1, Memorandum on the Education Chapter in the Royal Commission’s Report.

literacy was one of the factors which facilitated the spread of political ideas through newspapers and underpinned the protests of the 1880s.

The Secretary of the SED, Henry Craik, was a strident opponent of the expansion of Gaelic education. In his 1901 survey of Scottish history he argued that ‘one essential condition’ for progress in the social conditions of the highlands was ‘the spread of the English language – an opinion which the sentimentalists of our own generation have vainly tried to controvert.’⁵⁹⁶ It is possible he was referring to Professor Blackie.

Among many writers attempting to counter perceived anti-Gaelic views there is a consensus that the Education Scotland (Act) of 1872 Act was harmful to the Gaelic cause. The fact that the Act did not mention Gaelic is held to be evidence of this hostility. Further, the Act’s creation of the Scottish Education Department led to policies inimical to Gaelic in the education system and damaging to its social status.⁵⁹⁷

The education system has been looked to as one of the vehicles of Gaelic revival. There were modest concessions to Gaelic in the 1870s and 1880s but they had little overall effect, as the evidence of the census shows. Gaelic was added to the list of optional subjects for the Leaving Certificate in 1904 but the 1908 Scottish Education Act made no improvement despite a vociferous campaign by Gaelic organisations. An Comunn

⁵⁹⁶ Henry Craik, *A Century of Scottish History: From the Days Before the '45 to Those Within Living Memory* (Edinburgh, 1901), 23.

⁵⁹⁷ John Lorne Campbell, *Gaelic in Scottish Education and Life: Past, Present and Future* (Edinburgh, 1950), 46; Kenneth MacKinnon, *Gaelic: A Past and Future Prospect* (Edinburgh, 1991), 74–6.

Gaidhealach (AnCG) was at the forefront of this activity and published a compendium of statements on Gaelic education to remind the public and the political class that

the teaching of Gaelic has been consistently recommended during the last century by those best qualified to give an opinion, and the lack of it has been made the subject of repeated representations by Government commissioners and Inspectors. ...The arguments used are as cogent today as ever they were although they apply to a small section of the community.⁵⁹⁸

A positive development was the clause inserted into the important 1918 Education Act after pressure from AnCG. This campaign culminated in a deputation, led by prominent churchmen, to the Secretary for Scotland, Robert Munro (son of the Free Church manse and highland MP). Munro was fearful of losing the bill should anything too controversial be inserted but supported for the minimalist clause which was included.⁵⁹⁹ The clause was vague and had little impact on day-to-day practice but it was an important symbolic event and provided a foothold, albeit a precarious one, for the language in the education system.⁶⁰⁰ Research by AnCG in the 1930s found that Gaelic was being taught to over 7000 pupils in primary schools in the highland counties but that the aim was not the creation of conditions for the language to flourish but to aid the acquisition of English. Indeed, the report argued that Gaelic was the ‘cinderella’ of the curriculum and that there was little sign of it being used as a medium for teaching those whose first language it

⁵⁹⁸ An Comunn Gaidhealach, *The Teaching of Gaelic in Highland Schools* (Liverpool and London, 1907), 3–4.

⁵⁹⁹ *Scotsman*, 17 Sep. 1917, 3, for internal AnCG discussions of the matter and *Scotsman*, 9 Mar. 1918, 7, for a report on the deputation to Munro.

⁶⁰⁰ Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 243–4.

was, other than in the infant departments. This indicated that the status of the language had not progressed since the 1880s. There was little confidence among teachers of their ability to teach the language and they were prone to exaggerate the difficulties of Gaelic instruction. They could find no evidence that the education system or individual schools valued bilingualism.⁶⁰¹ The Gaelic clause of 1918 was perpetuated in later Education Acts down to the 1980s and imposed a duty on local authorities to teach Gaelic in (undefined) Gaelic-speaking areas. Critics of this position argue that the ‘terms are ambiguous and offer little support to parents seeking Gaelic-medium education provision for their children’.⁶⁰² Considerable practical problems remained despite the best efforts of AnCG and other organisations, teaching materials and the supply of properly trained teachers was limited.

In this area of highland history the mid-1960s were a crucial period. Writing at this time a senior educationalist argued that a tipping point had been reached. The disappearance of the language seemed possible but he felt that it was not too late to take action. He suggested practical ideas – Gaelic-medium education at primary and nursery levels, something along the lines of Scandinavian folk high schools, greater attention paid to oral use of the language in the education system – but his principal call was for a fundamental change of attitude toward the language. Regarding Gaelic as an academic special subject to be taught in a manner similar to Latin and Greek, rather than seeing it as a living language with a cultural hinterland, had had baleful effects. Teaching it as a viable

⁶⁰¹ An Comunn Gaidhealach, *Report of the Special Committee on the Teaching of Gaelic in Schools and Colleges* (Glasgow, 1936), 3–12.

⁶⁰² Boyd Robertson, ‘Gaelic in Scotland’, in Guus Extra and Durk Gorter (eds), *The Other Languages of Europe: Demographic, Sociolinguistic and Educational Perspectives* (Clevedon, 2001), 87.

language with an important place in the modern world, and in connection with literary and historical subjects would produce much better results.⁶⁰³

The major step forward came only in the 1980s when Gaelic-medium education, as opposed to the teaching of Gaelic as a specific subject like French or Physics, began to make progress in different parts of the Scottish education system. This was a significant shift but it came quite late in the long decline of Scottish Gaelic, too late as some would argue. Nevertheless, this was a major change in that, as AnCG had argued in the 1930s, bilingualism was accepted. One change which helped to facilitate this was the creation of the Western Isles Council in 1975. In terms of language policy this was highly significant in that the Gaelic-language heartland achieved a form of autonomy and the whims of Inverness and Dingwall were eradicated. The new Highland Regional Council, it is only fair to note, had a quite different outlook from the former County Councils which it superseded and began to show an interest in Gaelic from the early 1990s.⁶⁰⁴ This meant that a ‘Western Isles Bilingual Education Project’ could be developed which increased the active attention paid to Gaelic in its local context in many primary schools. This was a major step forward and was followed by the establishment of the first Gaelic-medium school at Breasclate in Lewis in 1986 alongside others in Inverness and Glasgow opened in the previous year. At this point in the history of initiatives to revitalise Gaelic there was an extraordinary level of hope invested in Gaelic Medium Education and the associated creation of Gaelic playgroups by Comhairle na Sgioltean Airich in 1982. One

⁶⁰³ John A. Smith, ‘The position of Gaelic and Gaelic culture in Scottish education’, in Derick S. Thomson and Ian Grimble (eds), *The Future of the Highlands* (London, 1968), 59–91.

⁶⁰⁴ HRC was based in Inverness and covered the whole of the Highland mainland, Skye and the Small Isles with the exception of Argyll and Bute which was, remarkably, in the gargantuan Glasgow-centred Strathclyde Region.

writer from this period noted, correctly, that ‘teaching Gaelic as a second language ... in school has been a singular failure’ and was confident that Gaelic-Medium Education could be the basis of a positive shift in the fortunes of the language.⁶⁰⁵

By the early 1990s eleven of Scotland’s twenty-two Gaelic-medium units were in the Western Isles. The official policy of the Council was to have Gaelic-speaking children as literate and fluent in Gaelic as in English by the conclusion of their primary education. Problems remained in that there was still a shortage of trained teachers and, until the output of the Stornoway publisher ‘Acair Press’ began to be marketed, a dearth of teaching materials. The decline of the language was such that only 39 per cent of the Gaelic-medium pupils in the early days of this policy came from homes where Gaelic was ‘normally’ spoken and, remarkably, 30 per cent (rising to 54 per cent in Stornoway) came from domestic environments where it was ‘never spoken’. Early studies showed that there was a high rate of parental approval for the policy, although there were still those who discerned a Gaelic-English ‘zero-sum game’ in which attention paid to Gaelic somehow detracted from English attainment.⁶⁰⁶ Intriguingly, the latest research suggests that this fear is groundless. Although we lack a longitudinal study, there does not appear to be a shortfall in attainment among pupils who have experienced Gaelic-medium education through their primary years. This is now quite a substantial group. After the initial work in this area in the mid-1980s the sector grew to encompass around 1700 pupils by the early 1990s and in 2012 there were 2418 pupils. Scottish Gaelic-medium

⁶⁰⁵ Ian MacIlleachiar, ‘Gaelic-medium schools – Why? And When?’, in John Hulbert (ed.), *Gaelic: Looking to the Future* (Edinburgh, 1985), 28–33; see also, in the same volume, Keith Scammell, ‘Pre-school playgroups’, 21–7.

⁶⁰⁶ Alasdair Roberts, ‘Parental attitudes to Gaelic-medium education in the Western Isles of Scotland’, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 12 (1991), 253–69.

education is distinctive in that it takes place in ‘dual-stream’ schools rather than in separate institutions, as is the case in Ireland and Wales. It is striking that of the 3500 pupils in Gaelic-medium education or pursuing fluent speakers’ courses in secondary schools Gaelic is the main home language of only 18 per cent and there does not seem to be a disadvantage for those who come from domestic environments, or wider communities, where use of the language is not intense. Indeed, as we have seen, there are few such communities left.⁶⁰⁷

The major weakness of GME is that it largely ceases at the end of primary school, or, in a very few cases, after two years of secondary education. This means that pupils who have undergone GME have to experience a transition to English-centred education just at the point where they have also to begin academic courses leading to important certificate examinations. There are only two GME secondary units – at Millburn Academy in Inverness and Portree High School in Skye. This has led one scholar to argue that although there is a great deal of GME provision ‘there is no *system* in the true sense of the word.’⁶⁰⁸ It has also been noted that GME fosters Gaelic as the language of the classroom but does not seem to have been successful in the transition to the playground or home. A recent survey has noted that nearly 90 per cent of GME pupils spoke English

⁶⁰⁷ Fiona O’Hanlon, Lindsay Paterson and Wilson McLeod, ‘The attainment of pupils in Gaelic-medium primary-education in Scotland’, *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, published online, 2012, 1–23 [http://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2012.711807], this is a very sophisticated and highly technical paper which attempts to compare the attainment of GME pupils with those in English-language schools; Martine Müller, ‘Language-use, language attitudes and Gaelic-writing ability among secondary pupils in the Isle of Skye’, in Wilson McLeod (ed.), *Revitalising Gaelic in Scotland: Policy, Planning and Public Discourse* (Edinburgh, 2006), 119–38 is slightly less optimistic and positive, although it is based on smaller statistical samples and lacks the comparative dimension and statistical complexity of O’Hanlon *et al.*

⁶⁰⁸ Robert Dunbar, ‘Gaelic in Scotland: the legal and institutional background’, in Wilson McLeod (ed.), *Revitalising Gaelic in Scotland: Policy, Planning and Public Discourse* (Edinburgh, 2006), 5.

in the playground. This may be facilitated partly by dual-stream schools. Further, 70 per cent spoke ‘mostly English’ at home. Given that there has now been nearly thirty years of GME it does not seem to have developed the self-perpetuating dynamic hoped for by its early advocates. More troubling is the evidence for the difficulty of transition to secondary education. There is some evidence that pupils quickly come to perceive themselves as a linguistic minority, subject to negative stereotyping and that the demands of academic specialisation overwhelm the positive linguistic effects of GME at primary level and English quickly becomes the dominant language once again.⁶⁰⁹ It is possible that the principal effect of GME has been to create a new ‘domain’ for Gaelic – the primary school – beyond which it struggles to survive and flourish. The historical point here is striking. Although the context is much more respectful and positive about Gaelic than was the case in the nineteenth century it may be that the effect is not so different from that of the education provided by the Gaelic Schools Society and the SSPCK in that the language does not survive into adulthood. Perhaps there has been an overemphasis on education as a means by which to revitalise the language. It has been observed that in attempts to counteract language shifts that the education system can ‘broaden the scope’ of the functions of a minority language but has only limited capacity to improve its ‘intergenerational transmissibility’. In the specific context of Scottish Gaelic a suggested over-reliance on reversing language shift through the education system has been

⁶⁰⁹ Marion F. Morrison, ‘A’ chiel ghinealach – the first generation: a survey of Gaelic-medium education in the Western Isles’, in Wilson McLeod (ed.), *Revitalising Gaelic in Scotland: Policy, Planning and Public Discourse* (Edinburgh, 2006), 139–54.

described as ‘devastating’.⁶¹⁰ This view can help to explain the oft-referred to ‘paradox’ that the rhetoric of renaissance and the reality of retreat exist in parallel.

The challenge of GME, or, indeed, any strategy for recreating the conditions in which Gaelic can flourish, is very substantial. The SNP administration which has controlled the devolved institutions in Scotland since 2007 has made a commitment that the number of Gaelic speakers will not decline on ‘its watch’. Recent statistical analysis has shown the way in which the Gaelic-speaking population is top-heavy with older people but with a bulge among primary aged children. Nevertheless, the proportion of the Gaelic-speaking population aged under twenty-five is well short of the 33.3 per cent which is the lowest required for creating a potentially viable population and in the Western Isles it was only 19.4 per cent. There is very little understanding of the use of strategies other than the current school-based policies to try and revive the language. Nevertheless, it does not seem likely that growing the numbers speaking the language through adult learners, even from the base of those who indicated in 2001 that they could understand the language – some 27,000 people – can have the necessary effect to reverse the decline.⁶¹¹

Collecting

The late nineteenth century saw attempts to rescue evidence of the oral culture of the highlands. The most important figures in this work were Alexander Carmichael and John Francis Campbell. Carmichael’s *Carmina Gadelica* and Campbell’s *Popular Tales of the*

⁶¹⁰ Joshua Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages* (Clevedon, 1991), 379–80.

⁶¹¹ Kenneth MacKinnon, ‘Growing a new generation of Gaelic-speakers: an action plan in response to a ministerial initiative’, in John M. Kirk and Dónal P. Ó Baoill, *Strategies for Minority languages: Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Scotland* (Belfast, 2011), 212–22.

West Highlands can be contrasted with earlier attempts by outsiders to foist invented traditions onto the highlanders. Further, they were influenced by European and English collectors who had developed working practices in the nineteenth century.⁶¹² Carmichael's work might be seen in the context of the growing political confidence which led to the Crofters' War of the 1880s. As well as the basic task of preserving what might otherwise have been lost there was also an effort to present it as evidence of a vital and independent culture. He related oral culture to the agricultural practices of the crofting community. He was also clear about the reasons for the decline of Gaelic culture. In his view they included 'the Reformation, the rebellions, the evictions, the Disruption, the schools and the spirit of the age.'⁶¹³ He was a politically engaged folklorist engaged working towards cultural rehabilitation and political assertiveness. Politicisation may have come from his friendship with John Murdoch, also an exciseman, with whom he had worked in Dublin. Murdoch recorded that not only did Carmichael provide copy for his *Highlander* but that he also 'got some men of means to take some shares'. This was by no means a negligible contribution as the newspaper's financial struggles were constant.⁶¹⁴ As he suggested in 1898 to Fr Allan McDonald: 'it might be the means of conciliating some future politician in favour of our dear highland people'.⁶¹⁵ Carmichael had also provided detailed evidence on grazing customs to the final volume of William Forbes

⁶¹² R.M. Dorson, *The British Folklorists: A Study* (London, 1968), 392–403; D. Doris, 'Contexts of ambivalence: the folklorist activities of nineteenth-century highland ministers', *Folklore*, 103 (1992), 207–21.

⁶¹³ Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica: Hymns and Incantations with Illustrative Notes of Words, Rites and Customs, Dying and Obsolete: Orally Collected in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland and Translated into English* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1900), i, xxi.

⁶¹⁴ Hamish Robertson, 'Studies in Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica*', *Scottish Studies*, 18 (1978), 220–65; John Lorne Campbell, 'Notes on Hamish Robertson's "Studies in Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica*"', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 18 (1978), 1–17; James Hunter (ed.), *For the People's Cause: From the Writings of John Murdoch* (Edinburgh, 1986), 149; Andrew Wiseman, 'The kilted exciseman: Alexander Carmichael (1832–1912)', *History Scotland*, 11(1), Jan/Feb 2011, 18–23.

⁶¹⁵ Campbell, 'Notes', 1.

Skene's study of Celtic Scotland.⁶¹⁶ This material was taken up by the Napier Commissioners and was influential in their plan for the revival of the highlands through the recreation of the traditional township. Campbell, on the other hand, was a more ambiguous figure. He was content to present his material as a 'museum of curious rubbish about to perish' and he was also closely associated, both politically and socially, with the House of Argyll.⁶¹⁷ There was a further contrast between the two men. Although Carmichael had worked as a collector for Campbell in the 1850s he adopted a very different approach to editorial matters. Through his work as an exciseman in the highlands he was able to contact people who had extensive knowledge of traditional material, especially the hymns and charms which were published as *Carmina Gadelica*. There has been extensive debate about his editing practices, especially relating to the transcription and presentation of prose tales. His willingness to insert material, essentially of his own composition, has been established by modern scholars. It would seem that his objective was to present what he had collected in the best possible light so that it would reflect credit on his people.⁶¹⁸ Indeed, Donald Meek has argued that he should not be judged as a scholar who would be 'inclined to assess the evidence' but as one who 'had a

⁶¹⁶ William F. Skene, *Celtic Scotland: A History of Ancient Alban*, Volume III, *Land and People* (Edinburgh, 1880), 378–93.

⁶¹⁷ John Francis Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (4 vols, Paisley, 1890), i, ii–iii; the collection was dedicated to the marquis of Lorne, the eldest son of the duke of Argyll.

⁶¹⁸ This debate might be taken to have begun with the exchange between Robertson, 'Studies in Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica*', 220–65 and Campbell, 'Notes on Hamish Robertson's "Studies in Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica*"', 1–17; it has been continued by Campbell in a further article, 'Carmina Gadelica: George Henderson's corrections and suggestions', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 13 (1981), 183–218; see also Alan Bruford, "'Deirdire" and Alexander Carmichael's treatment of oral sources', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 14 (1983), 1–24; Tristan Ap Rheinallt, 'Alexander Carmichael, Alan Bruford and Deirdire', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 28 (2011), 227–32.

tendency to “believe” and who can be characterised as ‘respectable cultural politician’.⁶¹⁹

Very important steps forward in this research have been taken by those engaged in the painstaking work on Carmichael’s manuscripts in the Carmichael-Watson collection in the library of the University of Edinburgh. This project has revealed a great deal about Carmichael’s collecting and transcription practices. While he did not take down the exact words which his informants articulated and he did not print exactly what he took down, neither did he ‘make it all up’. As has been pointed out by Domnhall Uilleam Stiùbhart he retained his papers and modern researchers can investigate his legacy and his practices.⁶²⁰

Carmichael retired to Edinburgh in DATE and became part of a circle of Gaels in the city, including Professor MacKinnon, and a wider network of those with a more romantic interest in Celtic culture. These included figures associated with the Celtic revival movement, such as Patrick Geddes who had been influenced by John Stuart Blackie. Gaelic folklore became ‘fashionable’ and attracted the attention of a range of dubious characters keen to try to establish their credentials in this area for financial gain. This is most clearly evident in the case of Fr. Allan McDonald of Eriskay, one of Carmichael’s associates and a man of immense ability and sensitivity as a pastor, a poet and a collector of the folklore of South Uist and Eriskay. Fr Allan came from Lochaber and had trained

⁶¹⁹ Donald E. Meek, ‘Faking the “true Gael”? *Carmina Gadelica* and the beginning of modern Gaelic scholarship’, *Aiste*, 1 (2007), 104, 105.

⁶²⁰ Domnhall Uilleam Stiùbhart, ‘Alexander Carmichael and *Carmina Gadelica*’, 1–39, and Ronald Black, ‘I thought he made it all up: context and controversy’, 57–81, both in Domnhall Uilleam Stiùbhart (ed.), *The Life and Legacy of Alexander Carmichael* (Port of Ness, 2008).

for the priesthood at Blairs College near Aberdeen and in the warmer surroundings of Valladolid in northern Spain. He spent most of his career in South Uist and, especially, Eriskay where he went in 1894 after a bout of illness induced by overwork. Much-loved by his parishioners he built a new church on the island, opened in 1903 only two years prior to his untimely death in 1905 at the age of forty-five.⁶²¹ Among Fr Allan's other characteristics was generosity and it was this which was taken advantage of by people who lacked his integrity. In the final years of his life, as the depth of his folklore collection became widely known, he was descended upon by three women who sought, to varying degrees, to exploit his material under the guise of collaboration. Marjory Kennedy Fraser was interested in the songs which he had collected for her ongoing project of tarding up traditional Gaelic material for a wider audience.⁶²² Most egregious was Ada Goodrich Freer who published a series of articles in respectable academic journals of the day presenting as her own material that had been collected by Fr Allan with minimal acknowledgement of his contribution, thereby advancing her own reputation in a cynical way and at the expense of Fr Allan's cultural legacy.⁶²³ Fr Allan's reputation was only restored to its true position long after his death through the indefatigable work of John Lorne Campbell of Canna who, with admirable clarity, exposed the low-quality plagiarism of Goodrich-Freer.⁶²⁴ The third of Fr Allan's visitors, Amy Murray, was the least problematic in that she had more respect for Fr Allan's work and greater sensitivity to Gaelic oral culture, but her book about Eriskay presented the

⁶²¹ Ronald Black (ed.), *Eilein na h-Òige: The Poems of Fr Allan McDonald* (Glasgow, 2002), 1–48; John Lorne Campbell, *Fr Allan McDonald of Eriskay, 1859–1905: Priest, Poet and Folklorist* (Edinburgh, 1954); Roger Hutchison, *Father Allan: The Life and Legacy of a Hebridean Priest* (Edinburgh, 2010).

⁶²² Marjory Kennedy Fraser, *A Life of Song* (Oxford, 1929), 107–18.

⁶²³ Ada Goodrich Freer, *Outer Isles* (London, 1903), 184–208.

⁶²⁴ J[ohn] L[orne] Campbell, 'The late Fr. Allan McDonald, Miss Goodrich Freer and Hebridean folklore', *Scottish Studies*, 2 (1958), 175–88; Campbell's campaign can also be followed in Perman, *Man Who Gave Away his Island*, 156–64 and Padget, *Photographers of the Western Isles*, 121–5.

island in a highly romantic and patronising way, regarding it as the closest to ‘the True Edge of the Great World as one may go dry-shod’.

The tradition of politically engaged collecting continued in the twentieth century with the work of John Lorne Campbell. Campbell came from Argyll-shire landowning stock but developed an interest in Gaelic while studying science and agriculture at Oxford in the late 1920s. During his time as a student he researched his first major work *Highland Songs of the Forty Five*. Campbell was encouraged by John Fraser, then Professor of Celtic at Oxford and also benefited from his friendship with John Bannerman. The latter recorded that Fraser had regarded as sentimental the idea of Gaelic as a living language. Another friend was the marquis of Graham, heir to the dukedom of Montrose.⁶²⁵ Both Bannerman and Graham were involved in the development of nationalist politics, although members of the Liberal and Conservative parties. Thus, in unlikely surroundings, began a career of importance to Gaelic culture in the twentieth century. Campbell was unapologetic and unabashed about his objectives in his book of Jacobite songs. He wanted to show that those who fought in the rebellion were not unthinking foot soldiers conscripted by desperate clan chiefs or motivated by violence or greed. In his view they were politically, culturally and intellectually aware of and committed to what they were doing.⁶²⁶ He was highly critical of the Scottish academic establishment, especially Peter Hume Brown, Professor of Scottish History at Edinburgh, whom he

⁶²⁵ Fohn Fowler (ed.), *Bannerman: The Memoirs of Lord Bannerman of Kildonan* (Aberdeen, 1972), 45–7.

⁶²⁶ John Lorne Campbell (ed.), *Highland Songs of the Forty-Five*, 2nd edition (Edinburgh, 1984), xvii–xxviii.

condemned as representative of a whig orthodoxy hostile to Celtic Scotland and uninformed about its history.⁶²⁷

Campbell spent most of his life in the Hebrides, first on Barra and then on Canna and worked indefatigably to record and publish Gaelic material, especially song. Campbell was keenly aware of the extent to which the songs which he collected, especially waulking songs, had been bowdlerised and corrupted by Marjory Kennedy Fraser ‘as art versions for concert-platform purposes’. He was appalled that ‘uncritical’ academic historians should regard her work as shedding an original light on Gaelic culture. His view was that her versions of the material were ‘greatly to the detriment of any effort to preserve and establish the authentic versions of the songs’.⁶²⁸

Campbell began serious collecting work when he moved to Barra in 1933. He regarded South Uist and Barra ‘as the richest storehouse of oral tradition, particularly of traditional folk song, in Great Britain, if not in Western Europe’.⁶²⁹ Not only did Campbell come into the eclectic orbit of Compton Mackenzie, also involved in nationalist politics, but he also made contact with John MacPherson, known as ‘The Cuddy’. This remarkable man – businessman, County Councillor and bearer of tradition – was central to Campbell being able to access the Gaelic traditions of the island. Not only did he help with Gaelic tuition but introduced him to other tradition-bearers and enlightened Campbell as to

⁶²⁷ John Lorne Campbell, *Gaelic in Scottish Education and Life: Past Present and Future* (Edinburgh, 1950), 12.

⁶²⁸ John Lorne Campbell, *Hebridean Folksongs*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1969–81), i, 29–30; his academic targets this time were Robert S. Rait and George S. Pryde of the University of Glasgow.

⁶²⁹ Campbell, *Hebridean Folksongs*, i, 1.

nature and historical depth of traditional Gaelic communities such as that in Barra. Writing in the late 1950s he reflected:

Twenty-odd years ago Barra was an island where, one felt, time had been standing still for generations. It is always extraordinarily difficult to convey the feeling and atmosphere of a community where oral tradition and the religious sense are still very much alive ... where memories of men and events are often amazingly long ... and where there is an ever-present sense of the reality and existence of the other world of spiritual and psychic experience.⁶³⁰

Campbell was aware of the difficulties of ‘the process of getting inside the tradition’ and the importance of a deep knowledge of the local Gaelic dialect. It was this with which ‘The Cuddy helped him. There were also technological issues, which had not confronted Carmichael or John Francis Campbell. Campbell experimented with different kinds of recorder both in Barra and on his expeditions to Nova Scotia. The final problem facing the ‘modern’ collector was the virtual impossibility of finding a repository to archive the recordings and other results of fieldwork. This problem was only resolved with the foundation of the School of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh.

Friendship with MacKenzie drew Campbell into involvement with political campaigns, especially to draw attention to the grievances of the fisherman of the island through the Sea League. Campbell’s publications as well as his archival collecting and broadcasting

⁶³⁰ John Lorne Campbell (ed.), *Tales of Barra Told by the Cuddy* (John MacPherson, Northbay, Barra, 1876–1955) (Edinburgh, 1960), 24.

continued the tradition of working to ensure the survival of fragile cultural materials. Campbell's work was, in fact, a partnership with his wife Margaret Fay Shaw. The couple met in Barra in 1934 but Margaret had been resident in South Uist since 1929 engaged on the task of collecting folk songs. She lived with two sisters, Peigi and Mairi MacRae, perfecting her Gaelic and gathering material for her volume which was published in 1955.⁶³¹

Academic achievements

Another focus of the Gaelic movement of the late Victorian period was the campaign to establish a 'Celtic Chair' at the University of Edinburgh.⁶³² This campaign had existed since the late 1860s at least but by 1874 the campaign was moribund. At this point the extraordinary figure of Professor John Stuart Blackie appeared on the scene. He was a very well-known 'character', principally for his university-reform activism and as an eccentric Professor of Classics at Aberdeen and Edinburgh.⁶³³ Blackie had unusual views on the Gaelic language, connecting it with Latin and Greek for example. He invested huge energy in the campaign and mobilised a diverse range of contacts. The extent to which the establishment of the chair contributed to Blackie's campaign is striking. The apogee was the introduction of Blackie to the Queen by the duke of Argyll and her donation of £200 for the cause. Other landed supporters included Argyll and the duke of

⁶³¹ Margaret Fay Shaw, *From the Alleghenies to the Hebrides: An Autobiography* (Edinburgh, 1999), 57–88; when Margaret Fay Shaw Campbell was presented with an honorary degree from the University of Edinburgh in 1996 one of her guests at the graduation was Michael Carmichael, grandson of Alexander Carmichael.

⁶³² Gillies, 'A century of Gaelic scholarship', 4–14.

⁶³³ A.M. Stoddart, *John Stuart Blackie*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1895) ii, 212–17 for the Celtic Chair episode; for a modern scholarly account see Wallace, *John Stuart Blackie*, 272–7.

Sutherland.⁶³⁴ Some of Blackie's friends who were supportive of the Gaelic Chair movement were worried that he was in danger of alienating supporters by politicising the fund-raising. The publicity given by John Murdoch's *Highlander*, to which Blackie contributed, did not help, in the view of more moderate Liberals like John Francis Campbell.⁶³⁵ Nevertheless, the *Highlander* was an important means of publicity and its detailed reporting of the donations, including those from abroad, did much to maintain the credibility of the campaign.⁶³⁶ By 1880 the necessary £14,000 pounds had been raised and Donald MacKinnon, later a Napier Commissioner, was appointed as the first Professor in 1882. This was an interesting moment. On the one hand the successful conclusion of this campaign can be seen as background to the growing political assertiveness of the highlands in the late nineteenth century. On the other hand it can be seen as one of the final examples of Victorian highlandism when the establishment could embrace a sanitised version of the culture of the region suspecting that it did not provide a political threat. Those, such as John Francis Campbell, who had more knowledge of demotic currents suspected, and worried, that something was afoot but there was little general awareness of this before the Battle of the Braes and this helps to explain why the outbreak of the crofters' protests came as such a shock to those who thought they knew the highlanders as peaceable and loyal and not at all like the Irish.⁶³⁷

⁶³⁴ NLS, John Stuart Blackie Mss, Ms 2635 contains much of Blackie's extensive correspondence on the Celtic Chair; indeed, material about the campaign turns up in archives of highland landed estates, see NRS, Mackintosh Muniments, GD176/2280/11.

⁶³⁵ Wallace, *John Stuart Blackie*, 271–2.

⁶³⁶ *Highlander*, 12 Jun., 10 Jul., 2 Oct. 1875, 20 Jan. 1877, 17 Aug. 1878, 18 Apr., 5 Dec. 1879, 18, 30 Jun. 1880.

⁶³⁷ Ewen A. Cameron, 'Embracing the past: the highlands in nineteenth-century Scotland', in Dauvit Broun, R.J. Finlay and Michael Lynch (eds), *Image and Identity: The Making and Re-making of Scotland Through the Ages* (Edinburgh, 1998), 195–219.

Mackinnon was a low-key appointment. He had not been at the front rank of the Victorian Gaelic world but he perhaps held less dogmatic positions than many who were at the forefront of such activity. He carried out vital editing work, especially of the ‘Glenmasen Manuscript’, and produced the first catalogue of Gaelic manuscripts in the Advocates’ Library in Edinburgh. Much of his work was published in the *Celtic Review*, which he helped to found, and the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* but he also attempted to reach a wider audience through a series of articles about Argyll in the *Scotsman* in the late 1880s.⁶³⁸ Despite this there has been a tendency to damnation by faint praise by later commentators.⁶³⁹ In some of his unpublished works, however, he expressed forceful views on the place of Gaelic in modern Scotland and on the need to integrate Gaelic culture into the history of Scotland.⁶⁴⁰ MacKinnon was succeeded by two of the luminaries of the world of Gaelic academic life, and figures who provided a direct link with the Victorian foundations of their field. William Watson, a blacksmith’s son from Easter Ross held the Chair from 1914 to 1938, a tenure which ‘established new parameters in several fields of Celtic’ according to Derick Thomson.⁶⁴¹ His most detailed research was on place-names, initially focused on his native Ross-shire but later comprehensively surveyed in his study of Celtic place names in Scotland. He also had interests in Gaelic literature and produced long-lived anthologies of both prose and poetry. He was instrumental in the foundation of the Scottish Gaelic Texts Society and

⁶³⁸ Donald Maclean, ‘Donald Mackinnon MA, Emeritus Professor of Celtic, University of Edinburgh’, *Celtic Review*, 10 (1914), 63–8; *Oban Times*, 2, 9 Jan. 1915; Donald MacKinnon and Lachlan MacKinnon (eds), *Prose Writings of Donald MacKinnon, 1839–1914* (Edinburgh, 1956).

⁶³⁹ John MacInnes, ‘Gaelic poetry in the nineteenth century’, in Douglas Gifford (ed.), *The History of Scottish Literature*, Volume 3, *Nineteenth Century* (Aberdeen, 1989), 393.

⁶⁴⁰ Edinburgh University Library, Centre for Research Collections, MacKinnon Collection, B.11, ‘The need for a history of the highland people’; B.14, ‘The claim of Celtic studies upon the lowland Scot’.

⁶⁴¹ ODNB; see also <http://carmichaelwatson.blogspot.co.uk/2010/11/professor-w-j-watson.html>; W.F.H. Nicolaisen, ‘In praise of W.J. Watson (1865–1948): Celtic place-name scholar’, *Scottish Language*, 14/15 (1995/6), 15–30.

inaugurated its important series of publications with a volume of verse from the Book of the Dean of Lismore.⁶⁴² Watson's second wife was Ella Carmichael, daughter of Alexander Carmichael, a notable scholar in her own right and editor of the *Celtic Review*. Their son, James Carmichael Watson, held the chair from 1938 until he was killed in action in March 1942. Carmichael Watson edited volumes three and four of his grandfather's *Carmina Gadelica* in 1940–1.⁶⁴³ By the end of the Second World War Celtic Studies was well-established in the Scottish Universities with a new Chair at Glasgow from 19?? and the subject was developed in a modern and critical direction by new generations of scholars led by Kenneth Jackson, Derick Thomson, William Gillies and Donald Meek. The foundations, however, were laid in the late Victorian period and much critical work was done by Carmichael, MacBain, Skene and others, in the field, outside the walls of the universities of the Scottish lowlands.

Gaelic and the state in Scotland

The late nineteenth century was an era of unparalleled political activity by Gaels directed towards the restitution of their grievances. Most of this was focused on the land question. Aside from the polite lobbying of organisations such as the Gaelic Society of Inverness and AnCG there was little focus on linguistic issues and none of the militancy associated with the campaigns on land reform. One commentator has noted that the journals that gave prominence to the land question were silent on the land question and that the

⁶⁴² William J. Watson, *Rosg Gaidhlig: Specimens of Gaelic Prose* (Inverness, 1915); William J. Watson, *Bàrdachd Ghàidhlig: Specimens of Gaelic Poetry, 1550–1900* (Inverness, 1918); William J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-names of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1926); William J. Watson, *Place Names of Ross and Cromarty* (Inverness, 1904); William J. Watson (ed.), *Scottish Verse from the Book of the Dean of Lismore* (Edinburgh, 1937).

⁶⁴³ Biographical resources are relatively sparse but see Ragnall MacilleDhuibh, 'Missing presumed killed', *West Highland Free Press*, 10 Jul. 1992, 11; John MacLean, 'The late Professor James Carmichael Watson', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, v (1938–42), 185–7.

politics of the land question, due to their focus on parliament, were largely conducted in English.⁶⁴⁴ The first of these comments seems a little unfair to the campaigning journalism of the period, especially that of John Murdoch. His *Highlander* was vociferous on linguistic issues, assiduous in relating them to the wider social and economic grievances of the crofters and cottars and critical of those who denigrated the language and culture of the Gael.⁶⁴⁵ Indeed, Murdoch regarded as heretical the notion that the questions of land and language could be regarded separately. When in 1877 Duncan Cameron, proprietor of the *Oban Times* (not then the radical newspaper it would become later), argued of Gaelic that ‘the sooner it is extinct the better for the social, moral and material progress of the highland people ...’ he was savaged by Murdoch.⁶⁴⁶ It is interesting to note, however, that only a few weeks earlier Murdoch himself had issued an editorial which argued:

It is all very well to keep up the language and establish a Celtic Chair for purposes of comparative philology for the benefit of all who are interested in such matters; but what to Highlanders are these things compared with their own life, and comfort, and independence, and material, social and more advancement in their own land.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴⁴ John A. Smith, ‘The 1872 Education (Scotland) Act and Gaelic Education’, *TGSI*, 51 (1978–80), 33, 41.

⁶⁴⁵ *Highlander*, 12 Aug., 4 Oct. 1873; 24 Jan., 9 May 1874; 3 Aug., 18 Sep., 20 Nov. 1875; 8, 15, Jan., 26 Feb., 25 Mar., 29 Apr., 27 May, 10 Jun., 22, 29 Jul., 1876; 20 Jan., 3 Feb., 4 Aug. 1877; 17 Aug. 1878; 18 Apr 1879.

⁶⁴⁶ *Highlander*, 10, 17, 24, 31 Mar. 1877.

⁶⁴⁷ *Highlander*, 20 Jan. 1877.

The second is true at an elite level but perhaps less so when one thinks of the ‘field-politics’ of the land question, the meetings of the HLLRA in the midst of the crofting communities, or the numbers of witnesses to the Napier Commission who gave their evidence in Gaelic.

Another narrative is the attitude of the state and the political class. If criticisms of the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act are effectively criticisms of the political class, especially representatives of the highland constituencies, then it is interesting to note changes in attitudes over the period since then and to ask what difference these have made. Clearly the political context has changed markedly over that period from one where only a minority were able to vote and most highland MPs were drawn from the landowning classes to one where a Scottish Parliament sits in Edinburgh and has responsibility for many, although not all, areas of policy relating to Gaelic.

In the first half of this period the official political attitude to the language can be characterised by relative neglect punctuated by sentimentalism. The former can be seen in the debates over Scottish educational matters. The latter is evident in the occasional statements on the subject of leading politicians. In May 1918 David Lloyd George spoke to the General Assembly of the United Free Church of Scotland. He referred to his feeling of Celtic affinity with the Gaels of the Scottish highlands and how when he summered in Gairloch he made a point of attending Gaelic religious services

...because of the special interest it had to a Celt like himself ... [it was] the language of the heart, the language of the altar in which they could worship when they got into the sanctuary, there was an inspiration in it, there was a help in it, there was a comfort and a solace in it ... ⁶⁴⁸

In the post-war period as attitudes hardened and the level of political debate coarsened a low point was reached in 1981 when the SNP for the Western Isles, Donald Stewart, attempted to introduce a Private Member's Bill to raise the status of the language. That this was talked out in order to prevent consideration of a measure to improve the health and safety measures in Welsh slate quarries was bad enough but what was worse were the regressive attitudes displayed by those MPs, including some from Scottish (Bill Walker, Tayside) and even highland constituencies (John MacKay, Argyll), who participated in the filibuster along with Douglas Hogg the Conservative MP for Grantham.⁶⁴⁹ By the time of the first bilingual debate in the Scottish parliament in March 2000 the change in tone was remarkable. Not only were a number of MSPs able and willing to speak in Gaelic but the Scottish Executive included a 'Minister for Gaelic', Alasdair Morrison, a native Gaelic speaker from North Uist who represented the Western Isles in the parliament. Although there were different views expressed the level of consensus around general sympathy for the language was striking.⁶⁵⁰ There was one continuity, however, and that was complaints that educational legislation, the *Standards in Scotland's Schools*

⁶⁴⁸ *Scotsman*, 25 May 1918, 6; Lloyd George was closely associated with two Gaelic-speaking MPs for highland constituencies, James Ian MacPherson (Ross and Cromarty) and William Sutherland (Argyll).

⁶⁴⁹ The tortuous debate can be followed at *House of Commons Debates*, ? series, vol. 998, cols 1088–152; MacKinnon, *Gaelic*, 111–12.

⁶⁵⁰ *Official Report of the Scottish Parliament*, Thursday 2 March 2000.

Bill, did not refer to Gaelic in its provisions, an omission pointed out by Michael Russell of the SNP.

Journalism and Broadcasting

The role of the media is another area in which much hope for the revival of the language has been invested over the period since 1880. In the late nineteenth century the newspaper industry expanded as it was subjected to lower levels of taxation. The new titles which emerged often carried Gaelic material: John Murdoch's *Highlander* and, from a contrasting political position, Duncan Campbell's *Northern Chronicle* both had significant Gaelic columns. They were, nevertheless, dominated by English-language material. Another element of their Gaelic dimension was their printing of Gaelic poetry which in an earlier period would have been transmitted orally or in printed forms available to much smaller readerships. This even facilitated the creation of scrap books of Gaelic material clipped from newspapers. The content of such newspapers was read back to gatherings in cèilidh houses, an example of the way in which oral and printed cultures were closely linked. As Donald Meek has argued, the acceptance of print as an addition to, rather than a replacement of, oral sources and transmission was the sign

of an emerging new, global community of knowledge, in which Scottish Gaels took their part in their day. ... Gaelic, in all its oral, literary and linguistic

richness, could not have been displayed without the immense contribution of the “iron print-blocks””.⁶⁵¹

Gaelic printed material was highly diverse ranging from the ephemeral newspaper to high ticket items such as the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* in their handsome green bindings. In the late nineteenth century this development seemed a very positive way forward for Gaelic. The high intellectual prestige placed on printed material meant that Gaelic elites worked hard to put things into print. Carmichael’s *Carmina Gadelica* volumes, printed by Constable, were beautiful and expensive items.⁶⁵²

The newspaper, however, did not prove to be a very significant medium for Gaelic in the long term. Despite the addition of such titles as the *Stornoway Gazette* from 1917 and the *West Highland Free Press* from 1972 the extent of Gaelic print journalism has not expanded markedly. Although local newspapers in the highlands and national titles, especially the *Scotsman*, have carried Gaelic columns of varying lengths much of this material has been cultural commentary or material of strictly local interest. There has been very little hard news journalism in Gaelic.⁶⁵³ There is a significant degree of continuity in this history in that even in the Victorian period pioneers such as John Murdoch or Duncan Campbell did not carry much political news or commentary in Gaelic, although some controversial topics were dealt with through the ‘dialogue’, also a

⁶⁵¹ Donald E. Meek, ‘Gaelic communities and the use of texts’, in Bill Bell (ed.), *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland*, Volume 3, *Ambition and Industry 1800–1880* (Edinburgh, 2007), 153–72, quote at 172.

⁶⁵² Wiseman, ‘The kilted exciseman’, 18.

⁶⁵³ Mike Cormack, ‘The use of Gaelic in Scottish newspapers’, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 16 (1995), 269–80.

common form in English-language publication in this period. This device set up a conversation between two characters holding opposing positions in order to fulfil a didactic purpose.⁶⁵⁴ Although some have called for and even roughly assessed the viability of a Gaelic-medium newspaper such a publication did not emerge in the era of print-only publication.⁶⁵⁵

There has been a tradition of Gaelic periodical publication from nineteenth-century titles such as *An Teachdaire Gaelach* and *Cuairtear nan Glean* to important Gaelic titles such as those produced by AnCG over the course of the twentieth century: *An Deo-gréine* (1905–23), *An Gaidheal* (1923–67) and *Sruth* (1967–79). The most significant Gaelic journal of the twentieth century was *Gairm*, edited by Finlay J. Macdonald and Derick Thomson from 1951 to 2004, when it ceased publication after over 200 issues. Other developments have included the activities of the Gaelic Books Council established in 1968 and the ongoing work of the Scottish Gaelic Texts Society. In a more commercial environment a range of small publishers have produced Gaelic titles but output has been dominated by the Stornoway firm *Acair* established in 1977 with support from the Western Isles Council, Highland Regional Council and the Highlands and Islands Development Board.⁶⁵⁶ Despite this range of activity the slightly limited range of material which has been produced and the narrow range of registers in which the

⁶⁵⁴ Sheila M. Kidd, 'Social control and social criticism: the nineteenth-century *Còmradh*', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 20 (2000), 67–87.

⁶⁵⁵ Derick S. Thomson, 'Publishing in Scottish Gaelic', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 5 (1984), 259–65.

⁶⁵⁶ Richard A.V. Cox, 'The Gaelic book', in David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (eds), *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland*, Volume 4, *Professionalism and Diversity, 1880–2000* (Edinburgh, 2007), 277–94; MacKinnon, *Gaelic*, 139; Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland*, 250.

language has been used has led one scholar to suggest that ‘the advances made may have hardly been adequate to serve a language and culture in the modern era’.⁶⁵⁷

Broadcast media, especially radio, but latterly television, has been much more significant in terms of Gaelic output than print journalism. The foundation of the BBC in 1922 provided another outlet for Gaelic; radio broadcasting took place from the mid-1920s and a major step forward was the establishment of a Gaelic Department in the BBC in 1935 and the allocation of a specific period for Gaelic broadcasts, initially only around 30 minutes per week. Much of the early Gaelic broadcasting was of musical and religious items although there were some news programmes just before the outbreak of the Second World War. From 1945 Gaelic radio broadcasting developed and by the early 1960s there was output of around 90 minutes per week. The mid-1960s saw significant expansion under the leadership of Alasdair Milne, who had a personal interest in Gaelic, at BBC Scotland.⁶⁵⁸ Some of this material was broadcast only to the North West of Scotland but from the mid-1970s, with the establishment of Radio Highland in Inverness (1976) and Radio nan Eilean in Stornoway (1979) the range of material broadcast became significantly more diverse. This work laid the foundations, in terms of professional journalistic standards and technical experience, for the opening of Radio nan Gaidheal in 1985 and soon there were more than twenty hours of Gaelic being broadcast each week.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁷ Cox, ‘Gaelic book’, 294.

⁶⁵⁸ Alasdair Milne, *DG: The Memoirs of a British Broadcaster* (London, 1988), 49, 54.

⁶⁵⁹ William Lamb, ‘A diachronic account of Gaelic news-speak: the development and expansion of a register’, *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 143–6, this valuable article is based partly on interviews with leading figures in the development of radio broadcasting in Gaelic; see also MacKinnon, *Gaelic*, 128–34.

There is a danger of presenting the expansion of Gaelic radio as a simple story of linear development. Such a interpretation elides significant difficulties. In the case of radio there was a very important debate in the 1970s on the occasion of the Crawford Committee on Broadcasting Coverage and then the Annan Committee on the Future of Broadcasting. Although neither of these reports provided very much specific encouragement for Gaelic broadcasting, they were occasions for the generation of important evidence about Gaelic broadcasting. Both bodies received a wide range of submissions from interested parties. In the case of the Crawford Committee the principal point was that there were significant areas of the highlands and islands that did not get an adequate reception of either TV or radio and their social, educational and cultural life was impoverished as a result. The shift of much Gaelic output and School broadcasting to VHF exacerbated these problems due to the difficulties of reception and the expense of buying sets to receive this output. The problem was particularly acute in very remote areas where there was no prospect of accessing other media on a regular basis.⁶⁶⁰ The Highlands and Islands Development Board even argued that this was a factor in making it difficult to attract economic activity to the region. They reported that the weakness of TV reception in the Lochcarron area was a complicating factor in the attempts to attract Howard Doris to establish an oil-rig fabrication yard. While they did not overstress this point it was noted that social problems were more likely to occur between the workforce and the local population if entertainment facilities in the workers' camps were deficient.⁶⁶¹

⁶⁶⁰ TNA, HO237/244, James Campbell, Headmaster Glenurquhart Secondary School, 12 Oct. 1973; HO237/246, Mairi Macintyre, Secretary Islay Council of Social Service, 24 Aug. 1973; HO237/252, Anne L. Cunningham, Public School, Isle of Muck, 30 Sep. 1973.

⁶⁶¹ TNA, HO237/237, Sir Andrew Gilchrist to Sir Stewart Crawford, 27 Feb. 1974.

This technical point, although with social and cultural consequences, was quite separate from the grievance that Gaelic broadcasting was too limited in time and scope, a point which was also made with force. John Lorne Campbell argued that the short-time available for Gaelic broadcasting made it impossible for ‘certain Gaelic literary forms to be present in broadcasting at all’. He was thinking of the narrative tales, to the collection of which he had devoted much time. He also argued that ‘programmes reflecting life in the Highlands and Islands seem to be virtually non-existent’.⁶⁶²

Those who argued this point, such as the Scottish Language Society or the Principal of the fledgling Sabhal Mór Ostaig, Dr Gordon Barr, were confident that increased levels of Gaelic broadcasting could boost the number of people learning and speaking the language and promote bilingualism. Barr argued that a local radio station, based in Skye, with radio output of 50 hours per week was the minimum necessary level of broadcasting. In addition, the station would provide economic stimulation and employment. Over the longer term the claim for such a link has been questioned.⁶⁶³ The report of the Crawford Committee admitted that provision for Gaelic TV was ‘negligible’ and ought to be increased both by the BBC and on commercial stations. The committee took a minimalist position and adopted statistical reasoning, pointing out the low proportion of Gaelic speakers in the Scottish population, rather than accepting cultural-defence or linguistic-

⁶⁶² TNA, HO237/249, John L. Campbell of Canna, 26 Aug. 1973.

⁶⁶³ TNA, HO237/245, Roy N. Pederson, Secretary, Comunn na Cànan Albannaich/The Scottish Language Society, 27 Aug. 1973; HO 237/249, Dr Gordon C. Barr, 27 Aug. 1973.

promotion arguments, both of which had been submitted to them. Its recommendations for Gaelic radio were extremely general.⁶⁶⁴

The Annan Commission looked at broadcasting in a more general sense and its archive contains ‘a prodigious number’ of representations arguing for a more sustained commitment to Gaelic broadcasting.⁶⁶⁵ The Annan Committee reported in the context of the disparity in treatment of Scottish Gaelic and Welsh. The Crawford report recommended that the latter be the main focus of the new fourth television channel in Wales. This was the focus for many complaints. Comunn Gaidhealach an Obain was ‘amazed and appalled’ and ‘filled with despondency at the apparent ignorance and lack of understanding of the Crawford Committee’ and could not understand the disparity in treatment between Wales and Gaelic Scotland.⁶⁶⁶ There was also further complaint about the transfer to VHF of the bulk of Gaelic radio broadcasting. The representations to Annan were even more focussed on the idea of using broadcasting as a means of defending and promoting Gaelic as a spoken language and increasing the visibility of Gaelic culture more broadly. Disappointingly, Annan stuck fairly closely to the statistical arguments adopted by Crawford and even moved beyond this to argue that ‘clearly the amount of programming in Gaelic cannot be increased considerably, without the risk of alienating the majority of the people in Scotland who do not speak Gaelic’. This is another occurrence of the ‘zero-sum-game’ mentality which was evident in some of the criticisms of GME in its early years. Aside from a general statement that ‘a special effort

⁶⁶⁴ PP 1974–5, *Report of the Committee on Broadcasting Coverage* (Cmnd 5774), 36, 56.

⁶⁶⁵ TNA, HO245 is the archival location for this material.

⁶⁶⁶ TNA, HO245/1316, R.L.M. Banks, Hon. Secretary Comunn Gaidhealach an Obain, 16 Dec. 1974.

ought to be made to provide some education programmes and programmes for children in Gaelic' there was very little of substance to emerge from the Annan report.⁶⁶⁷

Television has been looked to as a means of sustaining the language. Gaelic television was a late development in the history of the medium. The most significant shift came in 1989 when the Conservative government provided an annual sum of almost £10m and the Broadcasting Act of 1990 saw the creation of a Gaelic Television Fund, the most important objective of which was to provide funding for programme making, disbursed by the Comataidh Telebhisein Gàidhlig. Significant developments included an extension of Gaelic-language broadcasting into new areas. The most obvious example was the Gaelic 'soap-opera' 'Machair', which was broadcast along with current affairs programmes such as Eòrpa and more traditional forms of output relating to religion, music and culture.⁶⁶⁸ The development of digital television in the late 1990s and early 2000s provided another opportunity to create a platform for Gaelic broadcasting. The aim was to establish a channel dedicated to Gaelic. At the time this idea was first being canvassed the alleged benefits were presented in a highly exaggerated way.

In terms of human resource development alone the return on investment is considerable. Equally significant, although hard to quantify, are the economic and social benefits accruing from the fact that the Gaelic broadcasting services are

⁶⁶⁷ PP 1976–7, *Report of the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting* (Cmnd 6753), 411–12.

⁶⁶⁸ Mike Cormack, 'Programming for cultural defence: the expansion of Gaelic television', *Scottish Affairs*, no. 6, (winter, 1994), 114–31.

helping to enhance the overall status and prospects of Gaelic by making Gaelic speakers more self-assured, more outgoing and more entrepreneurial.⁶⁶⁹

BBC Alba was launched in 2008 and has been available on a variety of digital platforms to a wide audience since 2011 with most programmes being available in subtitled form. The channel is funded by the BBC in partnership with the Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig (Gaelic Media Service), MG Alba, which was established by the Communications Act of 2003 and is partly funded by the Scottish government.⁶⁷⁰ This partnership is an interesting development as is the fact that much of the programme-making is done in Scotland. There are potential difficulties, however; not least the fact that Broadcasting is a matter reserved to the Westminster Parliament under the Scotland Act of 1998 while most other legislative developments relating to Gaelic have been devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

Despite the very bold claims which have been made for the potential effect of broadcasting on the position of Gaelic it is not clear that all this activity, despite the distinction of some of the programme making, has lived up to initial expectations. Indeed, some of the original assumptions might be questioned. Although the broadcasting is in Gaelic much of the technical work is conducted in English due to the difficulty of finding specialists with Gaelic language skills. The programmes do not seem to encourage viewers to speak Gaelic, such as in the case of those with subtitles or Gaelic

⁶⁶⁹ Comataidh Craolaidh Gàidhlig, *Gaelic Broadcasting: New Dimensions for a New Millennium*, Draft Discussion Paper, September 1997, 5.

⁶⁷⁰ Robert Dunbar, 'Gaelic in Scotland: the legal and institutional framework', in Wilson McLeod (ed.), *Revitalising Gaelic in Scotland: Policy, Planning and Public Discourse* (Edinburgh, 2006), 8–9.

commentaries on football or rugby fixtures with English-speaking summarisers. Although television has been the scene of extending the registers in which Gaelic is used, it is also dominated by formats which are culturally non-specific – quiz-shows or soap operas, for example – and the ways in which this can have a positive effect on language acquisition are not well evidenced. The world of multiple channels on digital platforms can also lead to highly fragmented audiences and even with extensive government investment it is difficult for minority-interest channels to compete with the big players in the mass entertainment marketplace.⁶⁷¹

⁶⁷¹ Mike Cormack, ‘The media, language maintenance and Gaelic’, in Wilson McLeod (ed.), *Revitalising Gaelic in Scotland: Policy, Planning and Public Discourse* (Edinburgh, 2006), 211–19.

Chapter Eight

A History of Highland Politics

Politics is the poor relation of highland historiography in the modern period. The post-1746 history of the region, has been conceived in terms of social, economic and cultural history. The landmark books which brought the subject out of antiquarian darkness rarely mention political themes, other than during the 1880s.⁶⁷² The emergence of the ‘Crofters’ party’, propelled onto the national political scene by the newly enfranchised voters in 1885, is one of the few well-known political themes in highland history. After the election of 1886 politics retreats to the shadows as the Crofter MPs are reabsorbed by the Liberal party and the contests in the northern constituencies become more generic.⁶⁷³

In the period from 1746 to 1880, which saw the cycles of improvement, clearance, war, emigration, famine and protest that shaped the modern highlands, landlords are deemed to have neglected the cultivation of political representation in favour of expenditure on estate improvement. The defining ideology of Jacobitism was not replaced by another issue which marked out political alignments. This was a period in which Scottish politics were managed by Whig managers, notably the 3rd Duke of Argyll until 1761 and, later, in the period of the French revolution, by Tory interests headed by Henry Dundas. Electorates were tiny and landlords dominated politics in the constituencies in which their estates and superiorities lay. Although the population of Scotland was becoming heavily

⁶⁷² Gray, *Highland Economy*; Hunter, *Crofting Community*; Devine, *Clanship to Crofters War*.

⁶⁷³ Tindley, “‘The sword of avenging justice’”, *Rural History*, 19 (2008), 179–99; Newby, *Ireland, Radicalism and the Scottish Highlands* take the theme a little further.

urbanised the political system did not reflect this new social order. The burgeoning towns and cities were under-represented in favour of county seats that were overwhelmingly, although not exclusively, rural. Scotland was under-represented in the new United Kingdom. There were only forty-five Scottish seats in the period between 1707 and 1832. This increased to fifty-three in 1832 and seventy after the franchise reforms of the 1880s. If we include Buteshire, encompassing Arran and Bute, and Orkney and Shetland, nine of these seats were located in the highlands, a pattern of representation which endured until 1918. Thus, it can hardly be said that the highlands were under-represented in Parliament at a time when the city of Glasgow had only two MPs at Westminster.

Recent work has attempted to excavate the political culture of the region in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁶⁷⁴ This research has thrown up a series of themes which are suggestive for study of the period after 1918. The first is the role of landowners. It has been shown that there were many landowners who, far from neglecting politics, expended huge sums of money on elections. Macleod of Dunvegan, for example, spent £15,000 on a contest at Westminster in 1796; this amounted to three times his annual rental. He could not afford this and portions of the estate at Glenelg were sold for £40,000 in 1798 in an attempt to raise revenue. The fact that MacLeod could not sustain this political activity without incurring damage to his core interests as a landlord casts doubts on his acuity as an improver as well as indicating that a traditional highland estate in this period was not capable of delivering large revenue streams. Imperial investment, military recruitment, the kelp industry and sheep farming remained better bets for impecunious highland landlords.

⁶⁷⁴ MacKillop, 'Political culture', *Historical Journal*, 46 (2003), 511–32.

There is a contradiction in the way that politics has been thought of in highland history: the landlords are criticised for their neglect in the generation or two after Culloden but the Crofters are celebrated for countering landlord domination of politics at the general election of 1885. The nature of political contests changed with the expanded electorate in the nineteenth century and the vast outlays of the eighteenth century were no longer necessary. As the Whigs and later the Liberals began to dominate Scottish politics after 1832 landlords began to reappear as the parliamentary representatives of the counties in which their estates were located. Sir James and Sir Alexander Matheson, not short of financial resources, represented Inverness-shire and Ross-shire, from 1846 to 1884. The Marquis of Stafford was the MP for Sutherland from 1874 to 1886. Argyll was also controlled by the ducal interest. Although the eighth duke inherited as a young man in 1847 and did not have the opportunity to serve a political apprenticeship in the House of Commons, his sons, Lord Colin Campbell and the marquis of Lorne, held the seat in the 1870s and early 1880s. Sir Tollemache Sinclair of Ulbster represented Caithness until 1885 and the Sinclair Liberal dynasty returned to parliament in the form of Sir Archibald Sinclair (one of the few highland landlord MPs to reach the Cabinet) who held the seat from 1922 to 1945. Sir Donald Cameron of Lochiel (Inverness-shire, 18?? to 1885) was unusual as a highland landlord MP in representing the Conservative party, although Henry J. Baillie who sat for the same county in the 1890s was also a Tory. Sir Kenneth MacKenzie of Gairloch, Munro Ferguson of Novar and Alexander Mackenzie of Kintail were other Liberal landlord candidates. The disasters which befell his family in the eighteenth century after ill-fated political adventures did not deter Sir Reginald MacLeod

of Dunvegan from contesting Inverness-shire in 1885 and again, after a distinguished career in the civil service, in 1910.

If historians of the modern highlands have largely ignored politics then, for the most part, historians of modern Scottish politics have largely ignored the highlands.⁶⁷⁵ The region does not fit the established narratives of modern Scottish politics: the development of the labour movement (although there is a highland dimension to this), the rise of nationalism and the constitutional question. The highlands have been seen as Liberal territory by virtue of the fact that the party survived there in the inter-war period and the 1960s revival was evident there. Indeed, an electoral map of the highlands is predominantly Liberal but strong traces of wider Scottish and British patterns – especially in the 1940s and 1950s – can also be discerned. There are also parallels between the pattern of politics in the highlands and those in other rural areas of Britain, such as North Wales or the South West of England. The latter was another area of lingering and later revived Liberal strength.

This evidence of electoral patterns can be used to assess the extent to which a distinct political culture can be identified in the highlands. This might be seen in the Gaelic poetry and song which was such a prominent part of highland elections in the 1880s. The vehicle of oral tradition was certainly distinctive but a more enduring element of political communication can be found in the culture of newspaper publishing. Indeed, there is a

⁶⁷⁵ I.G.C Hutchison, *A Political History of Scotland, 1832–1924: Parties, Elections and Issues* (Edinburgh, 1976), v, remarks of the ‘crofters’ electoral revolt’ that it would be ‘heaping Pelion on Ossa to go over the ground again’; although see Henry Pelling, *The Social Geography of British Elections, 1885–1910* (London, 1965), chap. 16; I.M.M. MacPhail, ‘The highland elections of 1884–1886’, *TGSI*, 50 (1976–8), 369–?.

link between orality and print here in that many of the Gaelic poems with political themes have been found in the columns of highland newspapers.⁶⁷⁶ The radical newspapers which sprung up in the highlands in the era of the crofters' war have been extensively studied. We now know much more about the differences between the eccentric and individual lines taken by John Murdoch in the *Highlander*, the conventional mouthpieces of the HLLRA such as the *Oban Times* (although it took some time to warm up as a radical title) and Alexander Mackenzie's *Scottish Highlander*, and titles such as the *Highland News* which espoused advanced views on the land question influenced by land nationalisation.⁶⁷⁷ Other political voices were also present on the newsstands. The venerable *Inverness Courier* is a powerful continuity throughout the period covered by this book. Its political 'line' cannot be easily paraphrased beyond the way in which it has consistently insisted that politicians aspiring to the representation of highland seats should put the defence of the political interests of the region above loyalty to party or government. Another voice still can be found in the fascinating *Northern Chronicle* which from 1881 espoused a Conservative editorial line with a strong Gaelic inflexion, at least during the editorship of the remarkable journalist Duncan Campbell who gave the title so much of its identity and who deserves more attention from historians.⁶⁷⁸ Other notable newspapers include the *Stornoway Gazette*, established in 1917 at the same time as the Western Isles parliamentary constituency and which gave journalistic prominence

⁶⁷⁶ Meek, *Tuath is Tighearna*.

⁶⁷⁷ John Noble, *Miscellanea Invernessiana: With a Bibliography of Inverness Newspapers and Periodicals* (Stirling, 1902), 198–200; James Hunter (ed.), *For the People's Cause: From the Writings of John Murdoch, Highland and Irish Land Reformer* (Edinburgh, 1986); Andrew G. Newby, *Ireland, Radicalism and the Scottish Highlands, c. 1870–1912* (Edinburgh, 2007), 23–4, 33–4, 135, 140; Cameron, *Fraser MacKintosh*, 145, 180–2.

⁶⁷⁸ *Northern Chronicle*, 5 Jan. 1881; Duncan Campbell, *Reminiscences and Reflections of an Octogenarian Highlander* (Inverness, 1910), esp. 529–31; Ewen A. Cameron, 'John Murdoch, Duncan Campbell and Victorian journalism in the highlands of Scotland', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 40 (2007), 281–306.

to an area not especially well served by the mainland newspapers.⁶⁷⁹ This theme continued in the twentieth century. The *West Highland Free Press*, established in 1972 by the future Labour government minister Brian Wilson, provided a highly distinctive strand of campaigning and investigative journalism in the highlands in distinction to the bland tone adopted by most of the other local newspapers in the region by this time. Its political identity was strongly Labour and unionist, aggressively so at election times.⁶⁸⁰ Without the base of primary material provided by the newspapers it would not be possible to extract the distinctive and independent element of highland politics in the period after 1880.

The modern political history of the highlands is often deemed to have originated at the elections of 1885 and 1886 when the newly enfranchised voters elected the Crofter MPs. Arguably, however, the roots of this shift can be traced to a slightly earlier date. The election in the Inverness Burghs seat (which included Inverness, Nairn, Forres and Fortrose) in 1874 was striking on a number of levels. The Burgh electorate had been extended in 1868 to include all householders so there was a wider range of social groups able to cast a ballot. In addition, the advent of the secret ballot in 1872 removed some, but not all, of the possibilities for landlords and employers to resort to nefarious tactics to influence the outcome of elections. The 1874 general election saw the constituency contested for the first time since the reforms. The indolent sitting MP, Mackintosh of Raigmore, was challenged by Charles Fraser Mackintosh, a wealthy solicitor who had once been a Conservative town councillor but had attempted to reinvent himself as a

⁶⁷⁹ *Stornoway Gazette*, 5 Jan. 1917.

⁶⁸⁰ See article by Roger Hutchison, *West Highland Free Press*, 27 Apr. 1979, 2.

radical Liberal. To add to the confusion a third candidate, Angus Mackintosh of Holme, ran under Conservative colours. The prospect of a slightly different kind of politics discomfited the main Liberal newspapers.⁶⁸¹ Fraser Mackintosh's campaign was boosted by the foundation in 1873 of a radical newspaper, the *Highlander*, edited by a remarkable former exciseman, John Murdoch. He saw the election campaign and the columns of his newspaper as part of a wider project to, as he saw it, awaken the highlander from the inert state induced by the overbearing power of the landlord class.⁶⁸² The year 1874 was also important in a highland context for the events which took place at Bernera on the west of Lewis which drew national attention to the dictatorship under which the crofters lived due to the rule of Donald Munro, the factor for Sir James Matheson. This was a perfect example of the point which Murdoch was trying to make.⁶⁸³ The election of Fraser Mackintosh and the deposition of Munro after the nature of his methods to grind down the crofters were exposed at the trial of the Bernera crofters seemed to open up a new situation in the highlands.⁶⁸⁴

That the modernity intimated by this election was not universal can be seen by parallel events in the other burgh seat, the Wick District. This constituency, which included the Burghs of Kirkwall, Wick, Dornoch, Tain, Dingwall and Cromarty presented a very different face compared to the Inverness burghs. Through the papers of the jurist, Liberal politician and diplomat James Bryce, we can learn a great deal about politics in this seat. Bryce, whose grandfather had been a Presbyterian minister in Wick in the late eighteenth

⁶⁸¹ *Inverness Courier*, 5 Feb. 1874; *Nairnshire Telegraph*, 4 Feb. 1874.

⁶⁸² *Highlander*, 24 May 1873, 7 Feb. 1874.

⁶⁸³ *Highlander*, 25 Apr., 9 May, 26 Sep. 1874.

⁶⁸⁴ MacPhail, *Crofters' War*, 15; Cameron, *Fraser Mackintosh*, 57–8, 65–6, 92–5.

century, was already well known as a radical politician and had considered standing in a by-election in 1872. In the end he decided not to stand as there were already two Liberal candidates come forward, neither of them entirely to the liking of the party hierarchy but it was not felt constructive to encourage Bryce to go forward.⁶⁸⁵ He did take the field in 1874 as a radical Liberal candidate against the sitting Liberal MP John Pender, a very wealthy telegraph entrepreneur central to the achievement of a transatlantic cable in 1866. Despite his family connections to the seat, Bryce was regarded by some elements of the local press as too remote and was criticised for dividing the Liberal interest in an unnecessary contest. One newspaper in the constituency described the contest as one between a 'literary recluse and one of the distinguished leaders of British commerce'.⁶⁸⁶ Pender was expected to win and, indeed, he was returned with a majority of 137. Bryce's correspondence on the subject, perhaps tainted with the sour grapes of a losing candidate, contains hints of a strong suspicion that Pender had gained the seat through use of his considerable wealth.⁶⁸⁷ More relevant to our concerns was the advice given to Bryce at various stages of the contest that a significant factor was the support of the duke of Sutherland for Pender and his ability to influence the electors in the burghs of Dornoch and Tain.⁶⁸⁸

It seemed, then, that modern politics could flourish and a wide agenda of issues related to land and the condition of the highlands could be debated in a populous burgh seat, such

⁶⁸⁵ Oxford, Bodleian Library, James Bryce MSS, 167/26–7, W. P. Adam to W. H. Gladstone, 31 Dec 1871.

⁶⁸⁶ *John O'Groat Journal*, 5 Feb 1874, 4.

⁶⁸⁷ Oxford, Bodleian Library, James Bryce MSS, 167/142, Note to JB, no date but c. Feb. 1874.

⁶⁸⁸ Oxford, Bodleian Library, James Bryce MSS, 167/9, Alexander Ross (42 Union St, Inverness) to James Bryce LL.D (i.e. JB's father), 28 Dec 1871; 167/113, W. Rae (Proprietor of *Northern Ensign*, Wick) to Bryce, 19 Feb 1874.

as the Inverness district, free from the influence of a single landowner and with a vibrant press. On the other hand more archaic conditions prevailed in the smaller towns of the Wick district where a combination of a wealthy candidate and a powerful landowner could still influence the election. This was despite the fact that the package of reforms in the mid-1880s had included the Corrupt Practices Act of 1883 which imposed limits on expenditure by candidates during election campaigns. This did much to clean up politics but some older practices remained.⁶⁸⁹ This seat continued to be problematic due its small electorate and the exceptionally dispersed burghs. After a very tight election in 1900 the losing Liberals considered raising an election petition to challenge the validity of the result. They were persuaded by the Liberal Whip not to do this. It was not that he thought the election entirely clean but he was worried about the expense and the uncertainty of proving that black arts had been practiced.⁶⁹⁰ The small electorates of the burgh seats permitted this kind of politics to flourish and their survival after 1885 is evidence of the limitations on the radicalism of the reforms of 1885. Their scattered nature made them unusual in a period in which there was a strong sense that seats should be geographically coherent. Their strong Liberalism was perhaps a reason for their survival. In 1904 the Liberal candidate for Inverness Burghs, James Annan Bryce, was concerned lest the burghs be merged with the county and the latter divided creating ‘expensive and exhausting seats’, this in a time before the payment of a salary to MPs.⁶⁹¹

⁶⁸⁹ Kathryn Rix, ‘The elimination of corrupt practices in British elections? Reassessing the impact of the 1883 Corrupt Practices Act’, *English Historical Review*, 123 (2008), 65–97.

⁶⁹⁰ London, British Library, Viscount Gladstone Papers, Add Mss 45995, ff. 11–13, John Sinclair to Herbert Gladstone, 10 Jan. 1901.

⁶⁹¹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, 426/38, James Bryce Mss, James Annan Bryce to JB, 23 June 1904.

These hints of the problems thrown up by spatial and geographical issues can be developed further as a theme in the political history of the highlands. The technicalities of electoral reform can also be read to provide evidence for the way in which the highlands were perceived by the modern state. At the beginning of our period, aside from the two Burgh seats there were six county seats: Orkney and Shetland, Caithness, Sutherland, Ross and Cromarty, Inverness-shire, and Argyll. This was a pattern of representation which extends back to the Union of 1707 when Scotland was allocated forty-five seats in the new British parliament at Westminster and it would survive until 1918. The expansion of the electorate in the highlands in 1885 was much greater than for the country as a whole but the nature of the constituencies was not altered. They were not sufficiently populous to be divided, as had been the case with Lanarkshire or Fife. The continued existence of these seats is evidence that there were elements of continuity in the new system. Representation was still not seen as popular: places and interests were just as important as people in the construction of parliamentary seats. The nature of the 1885 reforms as a compromise between elite politicians, many of whom feared the implications of democracy, meant that there was no drive to equalise the populations of seats.⁶⁹² Such a move would have led to a severe reduction in the parliamentary representation of the highlands. Highland seats were unusual, however, in that they were dominated by one group, the crofters, something which the reformers had sought to avoid. This helps to explain their distinctive history in the decade or so after 1885. Parliamentary constituencies were designed to represent place and ‘interest’ rather than people but even in these terms there were some eccentricities in the highlands. The

⁶⁹² Matthew Roberts, “‘Arithmocracy’: Parliament, community and the Third Reform Act’, *Journal of British Studies*, 50 (2011), 381–409.

county seats, especially Ross and Cromarty, Inverness and Argyll, were huge and sparsely populated. Ross extended from the Easter Ross peninsula to the island of Lewis. The island of Skye, the 'Small Isles', the portion of the hebridean chain from Harris to Barra were all in Inverness. The Argyll constituency included Mull, Coll, Tiree, Islay and Jura. During the redistribution of seats which accompanied the extension of the franchise in 1885 some thought had been given to the idea of creating a Western Isles seat but that did not happen until 1918.

The redistribution of 1918 was conducted according to entirely different principles from that of 1885.⁶⁹³ There was a much clearer assumption of popular representation now that there was full male enfranchisement and women over the age of thirty were able to vote. The Boundary Commissioners, who had the task of drawing the new electoral map of the UK, were enjoined to create seats with at least 50,000 people but also to pay attention to recognised administrative boundaries. The first instruction contained dangers to highland representation but the latter provided some comfort. There might well have been a temptation among Unionists, who dominated the coalition government, to apply the rules in a rigorous manner given the recent electoral history of the highlands. In this context it is striking that Sir George Younger made a plea for rigorous application of population formulae to be relaxed in the highlands. He tried to give the impression that this was counter to his own party interest in that the highlands had a radical history. Lying behind this apparent generosity of spirit, however, lay political calculations. Younger may have been worried that reducing highland representation in favour of the industrial lowlands

⁶⁹³ Michael Dyer, *Capable Citizens and Improvident Democrats: The Scottish Electoral System, 1884–1929* (Aberdeen, 1996), 104–12.

could benefit the Labour party. Further, he used older ideas of representation to make his argument. He argued that ‘we ought to deal with areas with their characteristics and we ought to deal with historical and separate interests and so on’.⁶⁹⁴ This was a conservative argument against popular representation. There were also voices from within the highlands arguing against the application of the arithmetical principle of representation to the highlands. The fact that the Boundary Commission’s deliberations did not include Ireland was seen as problematic. Not only were Ireland’s 101 seats quite small in terms of population, around 44,000 on average, but the absence of consideration of another sparsely populated rural society created the possibility that the highlands would be neglected. One highland newspaper even argued that Ireland was entitled to its ‘over-representation’ because the ‘decline of the population ... was due to misguided policy in past times and the Irish people could not justly be penalised because of the errors of British statesmen’.⁶⁹⁵ Arguments in favour of a new constituency for the Western Isles, for example, were expressed in terms of its remoteness from the political centre in London and the special economic and social problems of the islands.⁶⁹⁶ The pattern of representation after 1918 is evidence that the highlands were still recognised as a distinctive place by the UK state and that place could survive as the basis of representation in the new, supposedly popular, system. Small highland seats, with population levels less than the supposed minimum of 50,000, remained in place. Indeed, a new seat of this kind, the Western Isles, was carved out of Ross-shire and Inverness-shire. Although the electorate in the new seat created in 1918 was small – only 18,000, Glasgow Central had over 43,000 electors – it had greater geographical coherence and

⁶⁹⁴ House of Commons Hansard, 5th series, 94, 645 (11 Jun. 1917).

⁶⁹⁵ *Stornoway Gazette*, 18 Feb. 1918, 4.

⁶⁹⁶ *Stornoway Gazette*, 27 Jul. 1917, 3.

improved the quality of representation of the islands. The Boundary Commissioners justified this recommendation with reference to ‘the character of the constituency and the pursuits of the islanders’.⁶⁹⁷ The highlands can be seen, in this light, as a distinctive and recognised political landscape.

Aside from the creation of a new Western Isles constituency, the 1918 Act saw the suppression of the two districts of Burghs and their absorption in the relevant county constituencies and the amalgamation of Caithness and Sutherland, something which had been mooted as early as 1832. This pattern of two island constituencies and four large mainland constituencies has remained in place to the present, although the boundaries of the mainland seats have been altered on many occasions. Currently the seats are: Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross; Inverness West, Skye and Lochaber; Inverness East, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey; and Argyll and Bute. After the 2010 Westminster general election there were plans for a further redistribution. This had its origins in plans by the coalition government to equalise the population of Westminster parliamentary constituencies and to reduce the size of the House of Commons from 650 to 600. In the highlands this would have meant consolidating the existing four mainland seats into three vast constituencies which would present enormous difficulties of coverage to their representatives.⁶⁹⁸

Redistribution proposals in the highlands, from 1885 to 2012 had important implications for the practice of electioneering and wider issues related to effective parliamentary

⁶⁹⁷ PP, XIV, Cd. 8759, *Representation of the People Bill. Redistribution of seats. Report of the Boundary Commissioners (Scotland)*, 6.

⁶⁹⁸ *West Highland Free Press*, 21 Sep. 2012, 7.

representation. Accounts of electioneering in the highlands cannot avoid the problems of covering the constituencies, especially in elections held in the winter, such as those of 1918 and 1922, where the ‘fight is almost as much against the elements as against the prejudices of voters’.⁶⁹⁹ Even after the creation of the new Western Isles constituency, sea, and later air, travel was vital for reaching the voters in a scattered constituency such as Argyll. In such seats a ‘yacht and a motor car inured to bad roads’ were vital equipment for a serious candidate.⁷⁰⁰ These spatial issues had serious political consequences. It is very striking that during the inter-war period the turnout in highland constituencies was very low compared to urban seats. The average over the period 1918 to 1945 was as low as 44 per cent in the Western Isles; Caithness and Sutherland with 60 per cent was the most enthusiastic of the highland seats. This compared badly with a seat like Glasgow Cathcart (70 per cent) or even a southern rural seat like Galloway (78 per cent). This cannot simply be put down to difficulties with travelling to polling places. In Inverness-shire in the period between 1885 and 1910 the average turnout was 80 per cent, which compared well with Wigtown (84 per cent) or an urban seat like Glasgow College (79 per cent).

The expansion of the franchise was vitally important in creating a modern political system in the highlands, as elsewhere in the country. The effect was probably greater in the highlands because of the very small county electorates in the period before 1885, as has been shown in chapter one. Nevertheless, this was well short of a democratic system. In Scotland as a whole it has been estimated that around 55 per cent of the adult male

⁶⁹⁹ *Scotsman*, 11 Nov. 1922, 12.

⁷⁰⁰ *Scotsman*, 1 Nov. 1922, 10.

population were able to vote. The expansion of the electorate in the highland constituencies can be seen in the following table.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Electorate</u>	<u>Voters (% of adult pop)</u>
1880	10087	4.7
1885	44505	20.6
1910	52108	24.8
1918	141798	70.6
1929	199232	85.8

Table 7: Electorate in the Highlands, 1880–1929.⁷⁰¹

Political Culture

The extent to which highland MPs, often landlords, were able to lobby in favour of policies in tune with their own interests and those of the region is one issue. This is evident in the eighteenth century with the activities of the Highland Society of London in favour of the ideology of improvement and over emigration. Interest-group politics can also be seen in efforts to establish and direct the activities of the British Fisheries Society. Such lobbying was strikingly successful, the best example being the activities which

⁷⁰¹ Statistics about the size of the electorate have been taken from F.W.S. Craig (ed.), *British Parliamentary Election Results* (London, 1977). The censuses of 1891, 1911 and 1931 have been used to make these calculations. The 1881 Census has no information about the ages of the population and the 1921 Census does not provide information on the ages of the population broken down by county. It has been assumed that the proportion of the adult population in the population as a whole was the same as 1911. If the 1931 figure is used the percentage of the population who could vote falls to 57.1 per cent which appears a little too low. Neither figure, however, is entirely suitable for this purpose. The 1911 figure does not take account of wartime mortality, the 1931 figure is affected by the emigration of the 1920s which removed a large proportion of younger people from the resident population.

preceded the Passenger Vessels Act of 1803 which, under the guise of humanitarianism, sought to restrict emigration by putting it beyond the pockets of small tenants. This theme can be seen in various contexts in the post-1880 period. Indeed, this is another potentially distinctive feature of highland politics in this period. Certainly the Crofter MPs in the 1880s saw themselves in this light, they were in parliament to secure concessions for the crofters, not to support a government of a particular hue. This was at once their strength and their weakness. In the constituencies it allowed them to make a pitch distinctive from candidates from the 'traditional' parties and probably secured their election. In parliament it was, as their critics had predicted, more difficult to realise this position of independence. Although there have been independent MPs representing highland constituencies, notably Eric Gandar Dower and Sir David Robertson in Caithness in the 1940s and 1950s, they were essentially Unionists who had fallen out with their parties. The group of Liberal MPs who were elected for highland constituencies at the 1964 and 1966 elections presented themselves as representatives free from the rigid positions of the major party blocs which dominated parliament at this time and, thereby, better able to lobby for the interests of the constituency. This line of argument had a long tradition among Liberal candidates in the highlands. An Independent Liberal in 1922 proposed a formal grouping of highland MPs in order to advance highland interests such as 'land settlement, housing, transport, steamer services, freights, roads, piers, and unemployment relief schemes.'⁷⁰² Once again this was the pitch adopted by candidates such as Russell Johnston, who took Inverness-shire in 1964. The local newspapers approved of such an approach, regardless of party affiliation:

⁷⁰² *Scotsman*, 11 Nov. 1922, 12.

... in all the highland constituencies the electors should vote for the candidates, irrespective of party, who seem most likely to fight first and foremost for the Highlands, risking even their party hierarchies' displeasure, if not censure, to promote the just cause and interests of their constituencies. The sad thing will be if the campaigns just starting fail to reveal at least one such stalwart in each constituency for it has been proved over and over again that precious little is ever accomplished for the Highlanders by the conventional party member.⁷⁰³

An additional point which was held to be the Liberals' favour in the mid-1960s was that they might hold the balance of power in tight parliamentary situations and this would add to their ability to lobby for the highlands.⁷⁰⁴

Another way in which a distinct political culture might be discerned in the highlands is by asking whether a coherent highland political agenda can be discerned. An immediate answer to this query would be to suggest that the land questions and issues relating to the crofting system form the basis for something distinct. This was a prominent issue in the 1880s and 1890s and perhaps in the elections of the Edwardian period. This was important but it was not confined to the highlands and was something which many felt distinguished Liberal Scotland in the years before the Great War. One leading Conservative felt that it was the land question which helped to keep Scotland Liberal at the elections of 1910 when his party made a recovery in England from the disaster of

⁷⁰³ *Inverness Courier*, 22 Sep. 1964, 2.

⁷⁰⁴ *Inverness Courier*, 8 Mar. 1966, 2.

1906.⁷⁰⁵ In the inter-war period it is more difficult to see such a clear political agenda in the highlands. The economic difficulties of the period led candidates to place more emphasis on economic planning, references to the New Deal in the USA and the need to protect agriculture than to traditional crofter issues of land tenure reform. Even in the 1880s, when the land question seemed so dominant there were other important issues which were close to the centre of Scottish politics. The issue of the disestablishment of the Church of Scotland, a standard radical demand in lowland Scotland, caused considerable difficulties for the Crofter candidates in the highlands. To advocate it was to run the risk of coming up against the tradition of Free Church constitutionalism which venerated the principle of established churches and which was so strong in the north, even after the death in 1884 of its leader, John Kennedy of Dingwall. The Irish question was even more divisive. **In 1886 this not so much divided as shattered the Liberal party, with extreme radicals, such as the Fife MP John Boyd Kinnear, taking up a Unionist position alongside those with a more traditional whig outlook. The crofter MPs were also divided, with Fraser MacKintosh contesting the election as a ‘Crofter/Liberal Unionist’. Other crofter MPs, such as G.B. Clark and Angus Sutherland, were condemned for being too close to the disloyal Irish, while Fraser Mackintosh was joined in the patriotic camp by Roderick Macdonald in Ross-shire. The Irish question brought an increased level of intensity to highland politics in 1886 and 1887 with competing figures such as Michael Davitt and the radical Liberal Unionist Joseph Chamberlain touring the region offering their different views. Although Gladstone returned to office in 1892 committed to bring forward**

⁷⁰⁵ London, British Library, Arthur J. Balfour Papers, Add. Mss 49860, ff. 213–15, Henry Seton Karr to Balfour, 5 Feb. 1910; Neal Blewett, *The Peers, The Parties and the People: The General Elections of 1910* (London, 1970), 402.

another Home Rule bill, which he did in 1893, the Irish question was no longer so divisive in Highland politics.

The imperial dimension was also strongly present in the politics of the highlands. This was perhaps most evident at the 1900 election, fought at the height of the Boer War, at which the Unionists performed more strongly in Scotland than they had at any time since 1832. A combination of this wider context and a specific hangover from the 1880s brought very distinctive politics to the highlands in the early 1900s. Although this was noticeable in Ross-shire and Sutherland it was most evident in Caithness at the general election of 1900. This seat had been held by Dr G.B. Clark since 1885. Clark was the crofter MP most open to charges of carpet bagging and opportunism. It was not that he was uninterested in the cause of the crofters but there was a sense that Caithness was a convenient vehicle with which to provide him with a parliamentary seat. Clark was involved in a very wide range of radical causes throughout his career but most important in the context of 1900 was his anti-imperialism. He was probably the most extreme ‘Pro-Boer’ in the United Kingdom at this time and the Caithness election became the most direct clash over imperial politics in that general election: ‘there is quite an imperial concern about the Kilkenny cat-like fight in Caithness’ according to the *Edinburgh Evening News*, the leading radical Liberal newspaper in Scotland.⁷⁰⁶ His opponent came from the heart of the imperialist camp in the Liberal party. Robert Leicester Harmsworth was the younger brother of Alfred Harmsworth, proprietor of the *Daily Mail*, the leading imperialist newspaper.⁷⁰⁷ The *Mail* characterised him as ‘an Imperialist and a follower of

⁷⁰⁶ *Edinburgh Evening News*, 10 Oct. 1900.

⁷⁰⁷ *The Times*, 20 Jan. 1937, 16.

Lord Rosebery'.⁷⁰⁸ The 1900 election saw the Liberal party divided over its attitude to the Boer War and the empire more generally and the Conservative party used the language of patriotism as a stick with which to beat the Liberals. Clark was an excellent target.⁷⁰⁹ The former Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery, led the imperialist wing of the party. Candidates like Clark, regarded with suspicion as an extremist even by anti-imperialist groups, allowed this wing of the party to condemn their opponents as disloyal and the election an opportunity for the inhabitants of the constituency to 'redeem the reputation of Caithness in the eyes of the empire'.⁷¹⁰ The local newspapers were strongly against him and exultant when he came third behind Harmsworth and a Conservative with only 673 votes. He was burnt in effigy in Thurso.⁷¹¹ Although the winner was perhaps the first candidate in the highlands to travel around the constituency at forty miles per hour in a large Daimler, it was his combination of imperialism and attention to local issues, as much as his wealth and transport, that allowed him to take advantage of Clark's unpopularity.⁷¹² This was such that he did not visit Caithness during the election. This debate about patriotism was widespread in the election of 1900 and the fact that it took place in Caithness was a result of the way in which politics in the seat had been radicalised as a result of the crofters' agitation in the 1880s. This was evident to a lesser degree in Sutherland, where John MacLeod of Gartiemore, a prominent figure from the agitation of the 1880s, succeeded Angus Sutherland. He was defeated by the cousin of the duke of Sutherland in 1900.⁷¹³ In Ross-shire too there were faint echoes as John Galloway Weir

⁷⁰⁸ *Daily Mail*, 3 Sep. 1900.

⁷⁰⁹ Paul Readman, 'The Conservative part, patriotism, and British politics: the case of the general election of 1900', *Journal of British Studies*, 40 (2001), 107–45.

⁷¹⁰ *Daily Mail*, 12 Oct. 1900.

⁷¹¹ *Caithness Courier*, 12 Oct. 1900; *John O'Groat Journal*, 12 Oct. 1900.

⁷¹² *Daily Mail*, 12 Oct. 1900.

⁷¹³ Tindley, "'The sword of avenging justice'", 188.

of Hampstead, a wealthy businessman who had made his fortune in the manufacture of sewing machines, followed the crofter MP Dr Roderick MacDonald. Both these men had expressed scepticism about the Boer war but Clark, who had represented the Boer Republics in London in the 1880s and 1890s and whose correspondence with Paul Kruger was discovered when Bloemfontein was captured, was deemed to be in an unpatriotic league of his own. This is an indication that the advent of the crofter MPs, far from providing evidence that highland politics were marching to a different beat from the rest of the country, brought wider issues to bear on elections in highland constituencies. This might not have been so clear had conventional Liberal and Conservative candidates contested the seats.⁷¹⁴

Political Traditions

The remainder of this chapter will examine the different political traditions which are evident in the highlands over the period since 1880. The most obvious place to start is with Liberalism. Any graphical representation of highland politics since 1880 would appear to indicate that the Liberal party, in its various formulations, have been the dominant force in highland politics. This is most evident in seats like Orkney and Shetland. With the exception of the years between 1931 and 1950, when it sent a Unionist to Westminster, this has been represented by a Liberal. This pattern, however, is not entirely replicated in the other seats. Inverness comes closest but even here there were years of Unionist (and their allies the Liberal Nationals) representation from the 1930s to the 1950s. Argyll is the bluest of the highlands seats, with a Unionist MP from 1924 to

⁷¹⁴ Luke Blaxill, 'Electioneering, the Third Reform Act, and political change in the 1880s', *Parliamentary History*, 30 (2011), 343–73, discusses this theme of localism versus 'nationalisation' in reformed politics.

1974 and for other shorter periods. So, the tradition of highland Liberalism requires some further explication. One can identify at least three distinct phases. The first phase lasted from 1880 to 1918 and was characterised by relative Liberal strength and by the ability of the party to absorb challenges. The second phase, one of almost unrelieved pessimism arising from electoral defeat and internal division, endured from 1918 to the mid-1960s. The final phase is one of relative recovery from the mid-1960s and in its later stages sees a new dimension of highland politics in the shape of elections to the Scottish parliament.

The first period began inauspiciously for the Liberal party. The reforms of 1885, as we have seen, had granted massive extensions to the electorate in the highlands. The advent of the crofters' party appears as a challenge to Liberalism, albeit a short-lived one. In 1885 the Liberals opposed the Crofters. This strategy failed and was less evident in 1886, although the picture was complicated by the split over Irish home rule. By 1895 the Crofters had been reabsorbed by the Liberal party. This was helped by the passage of the Crofters Act in 1886 but there were difficulties caused by the failure of Gladstone's fourth administration and the short-lived Rosebery government to provide further legislation in the period from 1892 to 1895. This led to the resignation of Dr MacGregor, perhaps the last Crofter MP, his defeat at a by-election and a short period of Conservative representation until 1906. By the elections of January and December 1910 all of the highland seats were back in the hands of the Liberals. The MPs, however, were of a very different stamp from those of the immediate post-1885 years. Most of them had very little connection to the highlands; some, such as Sir John Dewar in Inverness and Leicester Harmsworth in Caithness, were wealthy businessmen. The radical promise of the Crofters

wars seemed to have been dissipated and a pattern not unlike that of 1880 had been restored. To an extent this shows that politics in the highlands were following national trends. In 1900 the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists had done quite well in Scotland, winning thirty-six seats, so their showing in the highlands was consistent. In 1910, by contrast Scotland had returned decisively to the Liberal fold with fifty-eight seats and this was clearly evident in the highland constituencies. The Liberal party had been able to surmount difficult challenges, not only the crofters but also other potentially troublesome issues such as the matter of Church disestablishment, which was a major issue in Inverness Burghs, and Irish home rule. At this point Inverness was represented by Robert Bannatyne Finlay, a leading Liberal Unionist lawyer, Lord Chancellor in Lloyd George's coalition government from 1917 to 1919. Throughout his career as MP for the Burghs he had identified opposition to disestablishment as his principal appeal to the electorate. This had been popular in the 1880s and 1890s as the highland portion of the Free Church of Scotland held out in favour of the principle of establishment. The position had changed, however, in 1900 with the reunification of the Free Church and the United Presbyterians to produce the new United Free Church of Scotland. Finlay held the seat, with an interruption from 1892 to 1895, until he was defeated by John Annan Bryce in 1906. By this time Finlay was seen by many in the town as reactionary and an affront to the Liberal tradition of the place. He was not helped by the settlement of the long-running legal dispute over the creation of the United Free Church which reduced the distinctiveness of his appeal. The turn of the election towards issues such as land reform, free trade and the Chinese labour controversy gave the Liberals an opportunity to reassert themselves in the burghs as in the rest of the country.⁷¹⁵ Bryce was interested in Irish

⁷¹⁵ Oxford, Bodleian Library, James Bryce MSS, 426/46, John Annan Bryce to James Bryce, 22 Aug 1904;

affairs and was a strong supporter of Irish home rule but had no real connection with the highlands or with any of the burghs. His election is further evidence that the distinctive tradition of the 1880s had declined and that highland seats were conforming once again to wider Scottish patterns.

This pattern of domination was entirely broken by the changes which occurred during and just after the Great War. The Liberal party entered the Great War in complete control of Scottish politics but found the post-war environment very difficult. John Annan Bryce was prescient when he discussed the matter with his elder brother: 'everything is in flux. ... Party lines are snapped, and one doubts if they will be the same again in our time. When the war is over I doubt if a general election will give a Liberal majority'.⁷¹⁶ The Liberal party divided over the creation of the second coalition government under Lloyd George in 1916. There were now two Liberal parties: one led by Asquith, the deposed Prime Minister, which claimed to be 'independent', and the other led by Lloyd George which was in coalition with the Unionists and which had an electoral pact with them in 1918 and, to an extent in 1922. These electoral conditions made life very difficult for the independent Liberals. They won only four seats in 1918 and fifteen in 1922. Candidates with the 'Coupon' from the coalition government swept the board in 1918 and although there was some recovery in the 1920s there was further difficulty in the 1930s after the creation of a new coalition, the National Government, in 1931. The creation of this new coalition was the source of further divisions between those Liberals who wished to

426/57, John Annan Bryce to James Bryce, 28 Nov 1905; 500/87, Handbill of John Annan Bryce from 1906 Election; *Inverness Courier*, 24 June 1904; *Highland News*, 15 Oct 1904.

⁷¹⁶ Oxford, Bodleian Library, James Bryce MSS, 426/150, John Annan Bryce to James Bryce, 29 May 1915.

participate and those who did not. The former group itself divided in 1932 and some ministers left the government, not all of whom immediately linked up with the independent Liberals. Liberal division was at the heart of their electoral weakness in the inter-war period.

An additional factor was the redistribution of seats, the majority of the seats which were suppressed had Liberal traditions. As a result only four independent Liberals were elected in 1918, including in the new Western Isles seat. This was lost in 1922 but Orkney and Shetland was taken as there was evidence of a slight Liberal recovery to fifteen Scottish seats as the formal pact between Lloyd George and the Unionists broke down. The Conservative emphasis on protection and the growth of anti-socialist pacts aided further Liberal recovery in 1923 as twenty-two Scottish seats were won. In a number of highland seats, especially Caithness and Sutherland and Ross and Cromarty, the Liberals benefited from the absence of Conservative opposition. Although in Scotland as a whole some of this advance was given up in 1929 there were good results in the highlands as a range of seats, with the exception of Argyll, saw Liberal victories. By the late 1920s, however, this highland pocket of Liberalism was evidence of weakness rather than strength, of decline rather than advance. It demonstrated that Liberalism was capable of appealing to rural voters, their other seats were also in rural areas, but that they had little which was convincing to say to the mass of voters in urban seats in which the centre of gravity in Scottish politics was to be found. The main messages of Scottish Liberalism – land reform, temperance, free trade, internationalism in foreign policy – seemed less relevant in a period in which issues of unemployment, housing and economic depression had

primacy. The Liberals were not able to make the connection between, say, land reform and wider economic issues outside the highlands in a very convincing or detailed way. They did call in the late 1920s for a 'Development Commission' but it was to be mostly concerned with land settlement. By the 1920s these issues seemed merely faddist, as was demonstrated by Lloyd George's unsuccessful attempt to revive the party through emphasis on the land question.⁷¹⁷

The formation of the National Government in 1931 provided yet more difficulties for the Liberal party and was the occasion for further divisions. A group of Liberals led by Sir John Simon agreed to formally ally themselves with the National Government. In time these Liberal Nationals became indistinguishable from the Conservatives. Another group, led by Herbert Samuel, recognised the seriousness of the economic crisis and supported the National government but with a recognition of their position as independent Liberals. The key difference between the two groups was the continuing commitment of the latter group, which included Sir Archibald Sinclair, to free trade. The split became more serious in September 1932 when the Samuelites left the government in opposition to its protectionist policy and crossed the floor in November 1933.⁷¹⁸ The discussions which led to this breach were conducted at Dalnawillan, Sinclair's Caithness house. The 1931 and 1935 elections were a disaster for the party even in the Highlands. Only Sinclair in Caithness and Sutherland survived as a representative of independent Liberalism, even Orkney and Shetland was taken by the Conservatives. If these events did not expose the

⁷¹⁷ *The Highlands: A Liberal Plan of Development* (London, 1928); Michael Dawson, 'The Liberal land policy, 1924–1929: electoral strategy and internal division', *Twentieth Century British History*, 2 (1991), 272–90.

⁷¹⁸ Gerard J. De Groot, *Liberal Crusader: The Life of Sir Archibald Sinclair* (London, 1993), 75–103.

weakness of the party then it was brought fully into the light at a by-election at Ross and Cromarty in 1936. This was occasioned by the raising to the peerage of the sitting MP, J. Ian MacPherson. Under the coalition arrangements he was succeeded as the National government candidate by Malcolm MacDonald, who had lost his seat in Nottinghamshire and like his father, J. Ramsay MacDonald, a loser at Seaham in County Durham, was looking for a way back into parliament. The glare of publicity directed at Ross-shire was increased by the presence of Randolph Churchill as an independent Conservative candidate. Hector MacNeil, a future Secretary of State for Scotland, was an unusually high quality Labour candidate in a highland constituency. He played up his family connections to the Isle of Barra.⁷¹⁹ By contrast the travails of the Liberals were extensive. They struggled to find a candidate. Several likely personalities, including Alexander MacEwan, Provost of Inverness, declined to go to the poll. In the end an obscure, but courageous, Welsh doctor, W.S.R. Thomas, entered the fray. His task was almost impossible. Traditional Liberal ideas seemed to be losing their currency almost on a daily basis. Free trade, the heart of the independent Liberals' political identity, looked irrelevant and Dr Thomas' proposal for an international conference to counter economic nationalism appeared particularly lame. Even traditional Liberal ideas on land reform seemed old fashioned. Land settlement was no longer operative in the highlands and land values taxation could not revive the party as it had seemed to do just before the Great War.⁷²⁰ Even highland activists seemed to be moving well in advance of the Liberal party. Coincident with the by-election was the foundation of the Highland Development League. This organisation took its inspiration not from the Land League of the 1880s but

⁷¹⁹ Ewen A. Cameron, "“Rival foundlings”: the Ross and Cromarty by-election, 1 February 1936", *Historical Research*, 81 (2008), 507–30.

⁷²⁰ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 4 Feb. 1936, 2; *Ross-shire Journal*, 7 Feb. 1936, 2.

from the state-interventionist ideas of President Franklin Roosevelt's 'New Deal' in the USA.⁷²¹ Sinclair's declaration, in support of Thomas, that '**Liberal policy ... rests on the historic right of the highland people to the land upon which the clans lived**' did not meet the demands of the situation.⁷²² The result of the election was a disaster for the Liberals. Thomas received only 738 votes, 4.1 per cent, and lost his deposit. The election was won by Malcolm Macdonald for National Labour, a result which secured his return to the Cabinet as Dominions Secretary. Sir Archibald Sinclair was furious when he found out how much money had been spent on the campaign and concluded that the election was 'the most melancholy episode in the whole history of the Liberal party'.⁷²³ His exaggeration is understandable given the run of defeats which he had endured since succeeding Samuel as the leader of the independent Liberals.

The period from the mid-1930s to the mid-1960s was one of great difficulty for the Liberals. The Liberal Nationals moved ever closer to the Conservatives and despite desultory attempts at Liberal reunification they merged with the Conservatives in 1968. Liberal individualist ideas were pushed further to the margins as statist solutions to political problems moved to the mainstream. This was evident in thinking about the highlands. We have already noted the propaganda of the Highland Development League. The semi-official report of the Scottish Economic Committee, although associated with the networks of businessmen who had established the Scottish National Development Council, recommended a 'Development Board' to coordinate activity in the highlands. The Distribution of Industry Act of 1945, and its extension to the highlands in 1948, gave

⁷²¹ Lachlan Grant, *A New Deal for the Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1935).

⁷²² *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 6 Feb. 1936, 7.

⁷²³ Churchill College Cambridge, Thurso Mss, II/72/2, Sinclair to William Webster, 6 Mar. 1936.

government the facility to direct industry towards areas of high unemployment. The wider culture of politics in this period was highly centralist. This was evident in the creation of the welfare state and the nationalisation of industry, electricity generation and transmission being the most important in a highland context. The Liberals' observation of the wartime truce, when by-elections were not contested by the major parties, allowed their organisation to atrophy and the once-great party was in a sorry state by the end of the Second World War. This was manifest at the 1945 election when the Liberals were not able to secure any seats in Scotland. Even Sir Archibald Sinclair lost his seat in a very tight three-way contest in which the eccentric aviator and airport owner Eric Gandar Dower triumphed by only six votes.⁷²⁴ The Liberal party struggled financially and organisationally in this period but, more importantly it struggled to project its political identity. The expressions of opposition to socialism were clear enough, but that could be had from the Unionists as well. Scottish home rule provided another possibility but that did not always play well in the highlands. In Argyll in 1945 John Bannerman, who might have been thought to be an ideal candidate as a Gaelic speaker and a well known personality, was criticised for not being able to give a 'reasoned presentation of Sinclairite Liberal principles that is sufficient to be adopted in preference to those of the Churchill government'.⁷²⁵ This was a period in which there was a real struggle to keep independent Liberal politics alive and one in which Labour and the Unionists presided over a duopoly in Scottish electoral politics, regularly gaining over 95 per cent of the vote. In this task the highlands were identified as an area which was worthy of close attention as there was the vestige of a Liberal tradition there which could be built on.

⁷²⁴ De Groot, *Liberal Crusader*, 224–7.

⁷²⁵ *Oban Times*, 23 Jun. 1945, 5.

Two of the leading figures in the party in this period – John MacCormick, who had abandoned the SNP in 1942, and John M. Bannerman – had close connections with and awareness of the highlands. Bannerman, in particular, did much to keep Liberalism alive as an identifiable electoral force in this period. In all he was a candidate eight times in seats as diverse as Argyll, the Scottish Universities and later Paisley, but it was his four contests in Inverness-shire in the 1950s which were particularly significant. Bannerman's best result was in a by-election in December 1954. The winter conditions in the vast constituency presented challenges for all the candidates. Bannerman's result in this election, with 36 per cent of the vote, was one of the best Liberal results in the UK in the post-war period. He did even better in the general election which followed on in 1955 at which he gained nearly 39 per cent of the vote and reduced the Unionist majority to less than a thousand votes. In contrast to his campaign in the same seat in the general election of 1950, he gave strong emphasis to Scottish home rule. John MacCormick and other supporters of the Scottish Covenant movement, which was attempting to build an all-party campaign in favour of a Scottish parliament, was prominent in this campaign, much to the displeasure of the *Inverness Courier* which had supported Bannerman as an anti-socialist candidate in 1950.⁷²⁶ Indeed, in 1950 Bannerman had been quite clear about his anti-socialism. Although he had referred to Scottish home rule the presence of a strong Labour candidate induced him to emphasise his anti-Socialist credentials to a much greater degree. He opposed nationalisation, indeed he advocated privatisation of the iron and steel industry and the 'fullest use of private enterprise in rehousing the people'.⁷²⁷ Bannerman received much praise for this sterling performance at a very difficult time for

⁷²⁶ *Inverness Courier*, 17 Dec. 1954, 8.

⁷²⁷ *Inverness Courier*, 7 Feb 1950, 2.

the Liberals. In a further indication that the highlands were looked on as a distinctive political space even opinion generally supportive of the party was not convinced that the emphases which had been attractive to voters in the highlands would work in other areas of the country.⁷²⁸ Nevertheless, the work of Bannerman in Inverness-shire in the 1950s meant that there was an organisational base for the party to draw on in the 1960s.

Nationalism

The increase in support for nationalism has been one of the principal features of modern Scottish political history. This has been evident in a number of waves since the late 1960s, but notably in the general elections of 1974 and in the period since the creation of the Scottish parliament in 1999, culminating in the victories for the SNP in the Scottish elections of 2007 and 2011. In an earlier period, as we have seen in the cases of MacCormick and Bannerman, there was a close association between the Liberals and the emergent nationalist parties. The Scottish National Party was founded in 1934 as a result of a merger, driven by MacCormick, of the National Party of Scotland and the more right-wing Scottish Party.⁷²⁹ The inter-war period saw the formation of nationalist political parties but the political idea of Scottish home rule had a longer pedigree. Nineteenth-century groups such as the National Association for the Vindication of Scottish Rights in the 1850s and the Scottish Home Rule Association, founded in 1886 argued for schemes of devolution for Scotland. The National Association was a lowland urban-based movement but the SHRA had a greater connection with the highlands in the 1880s. A number of the Crofter MPs, especially Gavin Clark and Charles Fraser

⁷²⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, 24 Dec. 1954, 1.

⁷²⁹ Richard. J. Finlay, *Independent and Free: Scottish Politics and the Origins of the Scottish National Party, 1918 – 1945* (Edinburgh, 1994), 71–161.

Mackintosh, were involved in its activities. This pairing – the former a federalist and the latter a Liberal Unionist – indicates the extent to which the SHRA was a gathering point for a diverse group interested in Scottish home rule, rather than a nationalist party.⁷³⁰ Donald H. MacFarlane, as might be expected of a former Irish MP, also had ideas about the nature of the United Kingdom but his ideas, for a peripatetic Imperial parliament and ‘as much home rule as is consistent with the integrity of the United Kingdom’ were moderate if a little eccentric.⁷³¹ Indeed, the attempt to add issues such as Scottish home rule to the agenda of the crofters’ movement was a factor in its loss of focus. Other key figures in the movement, not least John Murdoch, had a long interest in Scottish (and Irish) home rule. The early Labour movement in Scotland, to which Murdoch and Clark were connected, was also supportive of Scottish home rule, as was much radical Liberal opinion. The experience of the Edwardian years confirmed many radical Liberals in the need for Scottish home rule. The defeat of the party in 1900 led to an attempt to rally around traditional Liberal causes such as free trade and Scottish home rule. A ginger group called the Young Scots Society was active in this cause. The experience of seeing the Small Landholders (Scotland) Bills rejected by the House of Lords in 1907 and 1908 confirmed many Liberals of the need for a Scottish parliament. The Liberal leadership, however, was lukewarm in its interest before its majority was eroded in 1910 and it was free from the need to seek support from the Irish home rulers. Even after 1910 when this situation changed Scottish home rule was less prominent on their agenda than measures for Ireland. This was a source of frustration to Scottish Liberal MPs, including those who

⁷³⁰ Ewen A. Cameron, *The Life and Times of [Charles] Fraser Mackintosh, Crofter MP* (Aberdeen, 2000), 164–70; Gavin Clark, ‘Rambling recollections of an agitator’, *Forward*, 3 Sep. 1910.

⁷³¹ Donald, H. MacFarlane, *Ireland versus England* (London, 1880), 4–5, 19–22; *Oban Times*, 5 Sep. 1885.

sat for highland constituencies.⁷³² It was this inchoate series of connections which the SNP sought to draw on in the highlands in the 1930s.

Although the early nationalist parties were uncertain about the extent to which a strategy of contesting parliamentary elections was the correct one they secured some of their best results in this period in the highlands. This was not an indication that the highlands were particularly nationalistic in outlook but through choice of good candidates with local connections such as John MacCormick in Inverness-shire in 1931 and 1935 or Sir Alexander MacEwan in the Western Isles in 1935 the SNP were able to take relative advantage of three cornered contests to score respectable results. MacEwan's 28.1 per cent share of the vote, although in third place, was the best result for an SNP candidate up to that point. A more common fate was a lost deposit.⁷³³ In making their appeal to the highland electorate the SNP emphasised their political independence from the main parties and, on some occasions, attempted to place themselves in a direct line of political inheritance from the Crofter MPs in the 1880s.⁷³⁴ These themes were clearly evident in MacEwan's campaign in the Western Isles in 1935. Although he had notable SNP figures, such as Mrs Burnett Smith (the homely writer Annie S. Swan) and the duke of Montrose, to speak for him, he played down the party political elements of his candidature.⁷³⁵ At a meeting in Stornoway at the start of his campaign he argued that his ambitions were not political but constructive. He was opposed to centralisation, evident

⁷³² Oxford, Bodleian Library, Asquith MSS, 89, ff.3-12, Deputation from Scottish Liberal Members of Parliament to the Right Hon H. H. Asquith, K.C., M.P.

⁷³³ John MacCormick, *The Flag in the Wind: The Story of the National Movement in Scotland* (London, 1955), 49-50, 88-9.

⁷³⁴ A point made by John MacCormick in a speech in Stornoway, *Stornoway Gazette*, 8 Nov. 1935, 8.

⁷³⁵ *Stornoway Gazette*, 22 Nov. 1935, 6.

in the 1929 Local Government Act, and argued that his ‘only ambition was to try to do something useful for the highlands, and more particularly for the Western Isles’.⁷³⁶ In common with many nationalists of this period he played down the idea of outright independence for Scotland in favour of a greater role for Scotland in the British empire:

I would never be a party to any scheme of self-government, to any scheme of devolution which was going to weaken the ties of Scotland to the British empire, or which was going to create any hostility or animosity between England and Scotland. The self-governing communities of the Empire were knit to the mother nations by ties far stronger than any legal bonds or anything that paper or parchment could bestow. But if the present neglect of Scotland was allowed to continue, there was a grave danger that there would arise in the minds of the Scottish people a sense of injustice and inferiority to England.⁷³⁷

In the event the election was won by the Labour candidate, Malcolm MacMillan. He was at the time of his election an undergraduate at the University of Edinburgh but he went on to represent the constituency for thirty-five years until he was toppled by the SNP’s Donald Stewart in 1970.

A more assertive form of nationalism was articulated in Inverness-shire by John MacCormick in 1931 and 1935 (he contested the seat as a Liberal in 1945). MacCormick

⁷³⁶ *Stornoway Gazette*, 20 Sep. 1935, 6.

⁷³⁷ *Stornoway Gazette*, 8 Nov. 1935, 8; for a discussion of this theme see Richard J. Finlay, “‘For or against?’”, *Scottish nationalists and the British Empire, 1919–1939*, *Scottish Historical Review*, 71 (1992), 184–206.

was the key figure in the foundation of the SNP in 1934. Indeed, the key conference of the National Party of Scotland which prepared the ground for the merger with the Scottish party took place in Inverness in 1933 and he was close to nationalists in the town such as Robin MacEwan, son of Sir Alexander, and the novelist Neil M. Gunn. An unspectacular result in 1931 led him to nurse the constituency and he came forward again in 1935. On both occasions he faced a three cornered contest with the sitting MP Murdoch MacDonald, a Liberal National, and a Labour opponent. To a much greater extent than MacEwan in the Western Isles in 1935 he referred to conventional nationalist themes such as the ‘right of small countries ... to make their own contribution to the civilisation of the world and to be free from external aggression’. He deplored the fact that Scotland was not represented at the League of Nations. He also attempted to place the SNP in the ‘old Radical tradition which implied devotion to the ideals of democratic government, of individual liberty and social reform’.⁷³⁸ His results were moderate – two third places with 14 and 16 per cent of the vote – but relatively good in the short history of nationalist campaigns. One of his principal obstacles was the unremitting hostility from the Inverness *Courier*, which condemned him as a ‘fantastic intruder’.⁷³⁹ In a theme which would recur frequently as a conventional highland response to nationalism it was argued that the highlands had more purchase in an ‘imperial’ parliament than they would in a putative Scottish parliament. The *Courier* referred to the

⁷³⁸ *Inverness Courier*, 1 Nov. 1935, 5; see also 20 Oct. 1931, 5.

⁷³⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 23 Oct, 1931, 4.

obvious fact that no part of the country would suffer more than the Highlands and Islands if Scotland ever obtained self-government. For the Highlands receive from the Imperial parliament not only the same grants as the rest of the country but extra grants of their own, so that in the Highlands today we are receiving considerably more per head of population than any other part of Scotland or England ... in a Scottish Parliament the Highlands would be in a hopeless minority and could not hope to receive anything like the same treatment as they receive from the Imperial Parliament. If any Highlander is foolish enough to believe that a predominantly Lowland Parliament would spend Lowland money on the Highlands to the same extent as the Imperial Parliament is spending British money on them he will believe anything.⁷⁴⁰

Although there would be no more nationalist candidates in highland seats until the 1970s this argument was used against home-rule-Liberals such as Bannerman and MacCormick and was the stock-in-trade of the unionist *West Highland Free Press* in the 1970s.

Aside from Liberalism and Nationalism the other principal political tradition in the highlands which emanates from the key decade of the 1880s is a Labour tradition. In the 1880s it seemed that Scotland was precocious in its development of Labour politics. There were many connections between the highlands and the wider radical movement which paid so much attention to the land question and which encompassed Ireland. The formation of the Scottish Labour party in 1888 provides some evidence that this was capable of developing in the direction of formal party politics. This is misleading,

⁷⁴⁰ *Inverness Courier*, 1 Nov. 1935, 4.

however; for most of the period down to the early 1920s Labour was incapable of building on these foundations. The dominance of the Liberal party for most of this period left little space for a radical party of the left to develop. On the eve of the Great War Labour had only three seats in Scotland and, in contrast to the position in England, no pact with the Liberals. The radicalism of the 1880s had been reabsorbed by the Liberal party, as we have seen. Activists who did try to establish branches of the various socialist groups in the highlands found it difficult to make progress. Joseph Duncan, in the late 1930s a member of Hilleary Commission on the highland economy, was employed in the Edwardian period as an organiser for the Independent Labour Party. He travelled throughout the east and north of Scotland in the interests of that organisation. Although he claimed to have been able to raise a meeting in Inverness attended by 1000 people he was not able to put down ILP roots in the town or elsewhere in the highlands. Privately he regarded the highlanders as too ‘sentimental’ to adopt socialist politics.⁷⁴¹ In this period attempts were also made to revive the radical spirit of the crofters’ movement from the 1880s. In 1906 a Crofters and Cottars Association was established with meetings at Fort William and Connell Ferry near Oban but it did not prove to be enduring.⁷⁴² A further move in the same direction was made by Gavin Clark and others in 1910 when they attempted to re-establish the Highland Land League with candidates at a number of highland constituencies in the 1910 and 1918 elections. This explicit attempt to recreate the political conditions of the 1880s was not successful.⁷⁴³ Part of the reason for this was the power of Liberalism in Scotland. The promoters of the new League were

⁷⁴¹ Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Joseph Duncan MSS, Acc. 5490(1)/153–5, Duncan to Mabel, 7 May 1907.

⁷⁴² *Oban Weekly News*, 16 May 1906, 20 Feb 1907; NLS, Joseph Duncan MSS, Acc. 5490(1)/66 Duncan to Mabel, n.d. [but c. summer 1906]

⁷⁴³ Graham Walker, *Thomas Johnston* (Manchester, 1988), 10–13.

well aware of this and their rhetoric asserted that it be 'free from the coat-tails of the Liberal party' and stridently denounced 'official Liberalism' as the deadly enemy of the Highland proletariat'.⁷⁴⁴ Despite its lack of electoral success, the League is suggestive of certain continuities in a possible Labour political tradition in the highlands. The presence of Gavin Clark provided a link back to the 1880s but the League was led by Thomas Johnston. At this point Johnston was editor of *Forward*, a Glasgow weekly newspaper closely connected to the Independent Labour Party and an important intellectual gathering point for a wider variety of different left-wing perspectives and which, through Johnston's pen, gave considerable coverage to matters relating to the land question in the highlands. The articles which later became *Our Scots Noble Families* were initially published in *Forward* and are an important text in the tradition of anti-landlordism which can be seen throughout much of modern Scottish political history.⁷⁴⁵ Despite this attention paid to the region the Labour party was unable to make much electoral impact in highland constituencies. In this period Labour was more prepared to accept a diversity of approach, including a greater toleration of Scottish and, as we have seen, highland, exceptionalism. This became less pronounced as the party suffered a series of reverses in the inter-war period. The strains produced by two periods of minority government and the division, and subsequent electoral disaster occasioned by the formation of the National Government of 1931 were capped by the disaffiliation of the Independent Labour Party in 1932. This presented major organisational headaches as the ILP contained the core of Labour activists and the base of the party had to be re-established with the foundation of a new body, the Scottish Socialist Party, which lacked the intellectual and political spark

⁷⁴⁴ *Forward*, 10 Jul., 4 Sep., 6 Nov. 1909

⁷⁴⁵ For example the articles on Barra can be found in *Forward*, 11, 18 Jul. 1908; Thomas Johnston, *Our Scots Noble Families* (Glasgow, 1909), J. Ramsay MacDonald provided a Foreword.

of the ILP. By the mid-1930s the party became more centralised in organisation and more centralist in its policies.⁷⁴⁶ These themes were evident in Ross and Cromarty in 1936. This election included a contest between Malcolm Macdonald as a National Labour candidate and Hector McNeil as a Labour candidate, both claiming to represent the true traditions of the party. McNeil tried to establish his credentials as a candidate for a Highland seat by stressing his family connections with the Isle of Barra. His campaign was run, however, by the Labour's leading Scottish organiser, the arch-centralist and unionist Arthur Woodburn. Both men would hold the office of Secretary of State for Scotland in the Attlee government. While some of McNeil's propaganda paid lip service to the radical tradition of the 1880s, including a piece extolling the land league of that period by Alexander Mowat, who claimed to have been involved in the Ross-shire by-election of 1884, his principal theme was the common root of the problems of the highlands and the lowlands.

The problem which demands solution in the Highlands is the problem which is forcing a solution in the industrial south. It is the problem of poverty accentuated in the Highlands by the assertion of the power of landlordism accentuated in the towns and cities by massed populations for whom Tory government and Tory society can find no work. Your interests are identical with the interests of the workers everywhere throughout the country. You have been served last and least

⁷⁴⁶ W.W. Knox and Alan McKinlay, 'The re-making of Scottish Labour in the 1930s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 6 (1995), 174–93.

by Liberal and Tory governments for generations, because the voting power of the masses is concentrated south of the Grampians.⁷⁴⁷

The results of this approach were seen in the post-war period. Although Labour candidates were put forward in most highland seats in the 1940s and 1950s it was clear from Labour's record in government that they were less than enthusiastic about developing specific policies for the highlands. The areas around Inverness and Fort William were given development area status under the Distribution of Industry Act of 1945 which was designed to attract industry to areas of high unemployment. Although the Attlee government was nominally committed to land nationalisation and to the taxation of the development value of land this was not seen as a viable policy in the highlands, even in such extreme cases as that drawn attention to by the Knoydart raid of 1947. This provided nationalists with a convenient stick with which to beat the Labour party in general and Arthur Woodburn, now Secretary of State for Scotland, in particular. The line was that Labour in Scotland was in thrall to a Westminster agenda which was insufficiently sensitive to the particular needs of Scotland and, to an even greater extent, the highlands.⁷⁴⁸

In the 1950s Labour candidates returned decent performances in the highlands but outside the Western Isles no seats were won and the party did not have a particularly distinctive message to present to highland constituencies. The experience of being out of office for

⁷⁴⁷ Alexander Mowat, 'The land league still lives' and 'Our problem is poverty', both in *Labour's Broadcast to Ross and Cromarty* (a copy of this election newspaper can be found at NLS, Woodburn MSS, Acc. 7656/13/2); see also *Ross-shire Journal*, 24 Jan. 1936, 4, 6

⁷⁴⁸ *Scots Independent*, December 1948; Hamish Henderson, 'Ballad of the men of Knoydart', in *Collected Poems and Songs*, ed. R. Ross (Edinburgh, 2000), 128–30.

thirteen years concentrated Labour minds by the time of the 1964 election and higher profile candidates were selected, more effort was made in highland seats and, most importantly a more distinctive message was presented to the electorate. The principal focus was the proposal to create a new board to promote the development of the highland economy. This was scarcely an original idea but it was presented with more vigour and with Labour having a greater chance of forming a government the context was also more promising. The early part of the decade had seen a concentration of controversies, most of which generated negative publicity for the Conservative government: the threat to highland railway lines after the Beeching Report; the threat to the NSHEB contained in the MacKenzie Committee proposals and the general winding down of hydro construction; the rejection of Inverness's case to host Scotland's fifth university. These events helped to create a narrative that in the highlands, as in the rest of Scotland, the government was out of touch and were likely to lose seats in the region.⁷⁴⁹ This was a prominent theme in the campaign of the author Allan Campbell McLean who was the Labour candidate in Inverness in 1964.⁷⁵⁰ McLean also sought to claim the radical inheritance from the 1880s, arguing that the Liberals had used military power to 'crush the crofters' revolt in 1884' and that the defeat of Kenneth MacKenzie in 1885 'resulted in the return of Charles Fraser Mackintosh ... with his three fellow crofter MPs and broke the 19th century Liberal monopoly of power in Scotland and paved the way for the creation of the Scottish Labour party'.⁷⁵¹ That this was a tendentious reading of history was less important than the fact that McLean thought that the 1880s presented usable material even eighty years after the events in question. In 1966 McLean stressed the

⁷⁴⁹ *Inverness Courier*, 22 Sep. 1964, 2.

⁷⁵⁰ *Inverness Courier*, 25 Sep. 1964, 7.

⁷⁵¹ *Inverness Courier*, 13 Oct. 1964, 3.

extent of Labour's record of achievement for the highlands after only 500 days in office, with particular emphasis on the establishment of the HIDB and the policy of economic development being concentrated at 'growth points'. He also stressed opposition to Britain's entry to the 'Common Market' and argued that this would be catastrophic for the highlands.⁷⁵² McLean's votes in 1964 and 1966 were only a modest improvement on his party's performance in the 1950s but Labour made something of a breakthrough in the Highlands in 1966 by winning Caithness and Sutherland in 1966. This seat had been transformed in the recent past by the establishment and development of the atomic energy plant at Dounreay near Thurso. This had brought new population into the region and helped to create the conditions for the capturing of the seat by Labour's Robert MacLennan. MacLennan also emphasised older themes in highland history, noting, for example, the extent of 'unproductive' deer forests as a 'disgrace' and calling for their eradication by 'compulsory purchase'.⁷⁵³ Given that he defeated a Liberal, George Mackie, it is ironic that MacLennan defected to the Social Democratic party in 1981, holding his seat in 1983 and negotiating the merger which created the Liberal Democratic Party in 1988.

⁷⁵² *Inverness Courier*, 25 Jan. 1966, 2; 11 Mar. 1966, 7; 22 Mar. 1966, 3; 25 Mar. 1966, 7.

⁷⁵³ *Times*, 15 Mar. 1966, 6; *Inverness Courier*, 29 Mar. 1966, 3.

Bibliography

Stuart Allan, *Commando Country* (Edinburgh, 2007).

Stuart Allan, 'Commando country: special training centres in the Scottish highlands, 1940–5', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2011.

An Comunn Gaidhealach, *The Teaching of Gaelic in Highland Schools* (Liverpool and London, 1907).

An Comunn Gaidhealach, *Report of the Special Committee on the Teaching of Gaelic in Schools and Colleges* (Glasgow, 1936).

Michael Anderson, 'Highly restricted fertility: very small families in the British fertility decline', *Population Studies*, 52 (1998), 182, 187–8.

Michael Anderson, 'Fertility decline in Scotland, England and Wales, and Ireland: comparisons from the 1911 Census of Fertility', *Population Studies*, 52 (1998), 1–20.

Michael Anderson, 'Why was Scottish nuptiality so depressed for so long?', in Isabelle Devos and Liam Kennedy (eds), *Marriage and Economy: Western Europe since 1400* (Turnhout, 1999).

Michael Anderson and Donald J. Morse, 'High fertility, high emigration, low nuptiality: adjustment processes in Scotland's demographic experience, 1861–1914, Part I', *Population Studies*, 47 (1993), 5–25.

Robert Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People, 1750–1918* (Oxford, 1995).

Robert Anderson, *Education and Opportunity in Victorian Scotland* (Oxford, 1983).

Richard Anthony, *Herds and Hinds: Farm Labour in Lowland Scotland, 1900 –1939* (East Linton, 1997).

Tristan Ap Rheinallt, 'Alexander Carmichael, Alan Bruford and Deirdire', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 28 (2011), 227–32.

Neal Ascherson, *Stone Voices: The Search for Scotland* (London, 2003).

Dudley Baines, 'European emigration, 1815–1930: looking at the emigrant decision again', *Economic History Review*, 47 (1994), 525–44.

John M. Bannerman, 'Post-war development of the highlands and islands', *Proceedings of the Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow*, 69 (1944–5),

Clive M. Birnie, “‘New deal’ or raw deal”? Public Administration and Economic Development in the Highlands & Islands of Scotland, 1929–1939’, unpublished MSc thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2003.

Clive M. Birnie, ‘The Scottish Office and the highland problem, 1930 to 1965’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2008.

Ronald Black (ed.), *An Tuil: The Flood. Anthology of Twentieth-Century Scottish Gaelic Verse* (Edinburgh, 1999).

Ronald Black (ed.), *Eilein na h-Òige: The Poems of Fr Allan McDonald* (Glasgow, 2002).

Ronald Black, ‘I thought he made it all up: context and controversy’, in Domnhall Uilleam Stiùbhart (ed.), *The Life and Legacy of Alexander Carmichael* (Port of Ness, 2008), 57–81.

Luke Blaxill, ‘Electioneering, the Third Reform Act, and political change in the 1880s’, *Parliamentary History*, 30 (2011), 343–73.

Neal Blewett, *The Peers, The Parties and the People: The General Elections of 1910* (London, 1970).

John Morton Boyd, *Fraser Darling’s Islands* (Edinburgh, 1986).

N. Broadberry and N. F. R. Crafts, ‘British economic policy and industrial performance in the early post-war period’, *Business History*, 38 (1996), 65–91.

Margaretta S. Brokaw, ‘Solving the highland problem: Frank Fraser Darling and the West Highland Survey, 1943–1955’, unpublished M.Phil thesis, University of St Andrews, 2003

George Bruce and Frank Rennie (eds), *The Land Out There: A Scottish Land Anthology* (Aberdeen, 1991).

Alan Bruford, “‘Deirdire’ and Alexander Carmichael’s treatment of oral sources’, *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 14 (1983), 1–24.

D. Broun and M. Macgregor (eds), *Miorun Mor nan Gall, The Great Ill-Will of the Lowlander: Lowland Perceptions of the Scottish Highlands* (Glasgow, 2009).

Bumsted, J.M., *The People’s Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America, 1770–1815* (Edinburgh, 1982).

Nicole Busby and Calum MacLeod, 'Rural identity in the twenty-first century: a community of crofters or crofting communities', *Journal of Law and Society*, 37 (2010), 592–619.

Michel Byrne, 'Bàrdachd Mhic Iain Dheòrsa: the original poetry of George Campbell Hay', PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1992.

Michel Byrne (ed.), *Collected Poems and Songs of George Campbell Hay (Deòrsa Mac Iain Dheòrsa)* (Edinburgh, 2003).

Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain, 1939–45* (London, 1969), 333.

A. D. Cameron, *Go Listen to the Crofters: The Napier Commission and Crofting a Century Ago* (Stornoway, 1986).

Anne Cameron, 'The establishment of civil registration in Scotland', *Historical Journal*, 50 (2007), 377–95.

Ewen A. Cameron, 'The political influence of highland landowners: a reassessment', *Northern Scotland*, 14 (1994), 27–45.

Ewen A. Cameron, *Land for the People? The British Government and the Scottish Highlands, c. 1880–1925* (East Linton, 1996).

Ewen A. Cameron, 'The Scottish highlands as a special policy area, 1886 to 1965', *Rural History*, 8 (1997), 195–215.

Ewen A. Cameron, "'They Will Listen to no Remonstrance": Land Raids and Land Raiders in the Scottish Highlands, 1886 to 1914', *Scottish Economic and Social History*, 17 (1997), 43–64.

Ewen A. Cameron, 'Embracing the past: the highlands in nineteenth-century Scotland', in Dauvit Broun, R.J. Finlay and Michael Lynch (eds), *Image and Identity: The Making and Re-making of Scotland Through the Ages* (Edinburgh, 1998), 195–219.

Ewen A. Cameron, *The Life and Times of [Charles] Fraser Mackintosh* (Aberdeen, 2000).

Ewen A. Cameron, 'Unfinished Business: The Land Question and the New Scottish Parliament', *Contemporary British History*, 15 (2001), 83–114.

Ewen A. Cameron, 'Civil Society, Protest and Parliament: Housing and Land in Modern Scotland', in H. T. Dickinson and M. Lynch (eds), *The Challenge to Westminster: Sovereignty, Devolution and Independence* (East Linton, 2000), 123–32.

Ewen A. Cameron, 'The Seven Men of Knoydart and the Scottish Highlands in the 1940s', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 62 (2001–3), 156–83.

Ewen A. Cameron, 'Communication or separation? Reactions to Irish land agitation and legislation in the highlands of Scotland, c. 1870–1910', *English Historical Review*, 120 (2005), 633–66.

Ewen A. Cameron, 'The Modernisation of Scottish Agriculture' in T.M. Devine, G. C. Peden and C. H. Lee (eds), *The Transformation of Scotland: The Economy since 1700* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005).

Ewen A. Cameron, 'John Murdoch, Duncan Campbell and Victorian journalism in the highlands of Scotland', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 40 (2007), 281–306.

Ewen A. Cameron, "'Rival foundlings": the Ross and Cromarty by-election, 1 February 1936', *Historical Research*, 81 (2008), 507–30.

Ewen A. Cameron, 'Setting the heather on fire: the land question in Scotland', in Matthew Cragoe and Paul Readman (eds), *The Land Question in Britain* (Basingstoke, 2010), 109–25.

Ewen A. Cameron, *Impaled on a Thistle: Scotland since 1880* (Edinburgh, 2010).

Ewen A. Cameron, 'Internal policing and public order, c.1797–1900', in Edward M. Spiers, Jeremy A. Crang and Matthew J. Strickland (eds), *A Military History of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2012), 620–34.

Ewen A. Cameron, "'An Agrarian Star Chamber"? The Scottish Land Court to 1955', in *No Ordinary Court: 100 Years of the Scottish Land Court* (Edinburgh, 2012).

Ewen A. Cameron (ed.), *Recovering from the Clearances: Land Struggle, Resettlement, and Community Ownership in the Hebrides* (Kershader, 2013).

Ewen A. Cameron and Iain J.M. Robertson, 'Fighting and bleeding for the land: the Great War and the Scottish highlands', in C. M. M. Macdonald and E. W. McFarland (eds), *Scotland and the Great War* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999),

Ewen A. Cameron and Andrew G. Newby, "'A Little Leaflet" by Sheriff Alexander Nicolson concerning the Crofters' Agitation' *Innes Review*, 55 (2004), 83–92.

David Cameron, 'Recovering from the clearances: land ownership', in Ewen A. Cameron (ed.), *Recovering from the Clearances: Land Struggle, Resettlement, and Community Ownership in the Hebrides* (Kershader, 2013), 191–204.

Angus Peter Campbell, 'Father Rocket – twenty years on', *West Highland Free Press*, 16 Feb 1979, 3.

Duncan Campbell, *Reminiscences and Reflections of an Octogenarian Highlander* (Inverness, 1910).

George Douglas Campbell, eighth duke of Argyll, *Crofts and farms in the Hebrides; being an account of the management of an island estate for 130 years* (Edinburgh, 1883).

George Douglas Campbell, eighth duke of Argyll, 'A corrected picture of the highlands', *Nineteenth Century*, 16 (1884) 681–701.

George Douglas Campbell, eighth duke of Argyll, 'The Prophet of San Francisco', *Nineteenth Century*, 15 (1884), 537–58;

Hugh F. Campbell, *Highland Reconstruction* (Glasgow, 1920).

John Francis Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (4 vols, Paisley, 1890),

John Lorne Campbell, *Gaelic in Scottish Education and Life: Past, Present and Future* (Edinburgh, 1950).

John Lorne Campbell, *Fr Allan McDonald of Eriskay, 1859–1905: Priest, Poet and Folklorist* (Edinburgh, 1954).

J[ohn] L[orne] Campbell, 'The late Fr. Allan McDonald, Miss Goodrich Freer and Hebridean folklore', *Scottish Studies*, 2 (1958), 175–88.

John Lorne Campbell (ed.), *Tales of Barra Told by the Cuddy (John MacPherson, Northbay, Barra, 1876–1955)* (Edinburgh, 1960).

John Lorne Campbell, *Hebridean Folksongs*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1969–81).

John Lorne Campbell, 'Notes on Hamish Robertson's "Studies in Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica*"', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 18 (1978), 1–17.

John Lorne Campbell, 'Carmina Gadelica: George Henderson's corrections and suggestions', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 13 (1981), 183–218.

John Lorne Campbell (ed.), *Highland Songs of the Forty-Five*, 2nd edition (Edinburgh, 1984).

John Lorne Campbell, 'The Crofter's Commission in Barra, 1883', in John Lorne Campbell (ed.), *The Book of Barra* (Stornoway, 1998), 198–204.

R.H. Campbell, 'The Scottish office and the special areas in the 1930s', *Historical Journal*, 22 (1979), 167–83.

R.H. Campbell, 'The committee of ex-Secretaries of State and industrial policy', *Scottish Industrial History*, 2 (1979), 1–10.

David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven, 1990).

Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica: Hymns and Incantations with Illustrative Notes of Words, Rites and Customs, Dying and Obsolete: Orally Collected in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland and Translated into English* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1900).

Ian Carter, 'Six years on: an evaluative study of the HIDB', *Aberdeen University Review*, 45 (1973–4), 55–78.

Ian Carter, 'The highlands of Scotland as an underdeveloped region', in E. de Kadt and G. Williams (eds), *Sociology and Development* (London, 1974), 279–311.

James L Caw, *William McTaggart RSA VPRSW. A Biography and an Appreciation* (Glasgow, 1917).

Robert D. Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero: The Image of the Highlander, 1745–1830* (Edinburgh, 1995).

Ansley J. Coale and Susan Cotts Watkins (eds), *The Decline of Fertility in Europe: The Revised Proceedings of a Conference on the Princeton European Fertility Project* (Princeton, 1986).

Dan Coetzee, 'A life and death decision: the influence of trends in fertility, nuptiality and family economies on voluntary enlistment in Scotland, August 1914 to December 1915', *Family and Community History*, 8 (2005), 77–89.

Dan Coetzee, 'Measures of enthusiasm: new avenues in quantifying variations in voluntary enlistment in Scotland, August 1914–December 1915', *Local Population Studies*, No 74 (Spring 2005), 16–35.

Comataidh Craolaidh Gaidhlig, *Gaelic Broadcasting: New Dimensions for a New Millennium*, Draft Discussion Paper, September 1997.

Mike Cormack, 'Programming for cultural defence: the expansion of Gaelic television', *Scottish Affairs*, no. 6, (winter, 1994), 114–31.

Mike Cormack, 'The use of Gaelic in Scottish newspapers', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 16 (1995), 269–80.

Mike Cormack, 'The media, language maintenance and Gaelic', in Wilson McLeod (ed.), *Revitalising Gaelic in Scotland: Policy, Planning and Public Discourse* (Edinburgh, 2006), 211–19.

Joe Corrie, *Scottish Pride and Other Poems* (Newton Stewart, c.1955).

James R. Coull, *The Sea Fisheries of Scotland: A Historical Geography* (Edinburgh, 1996)

Sir Robert Cowan, 'A highlands and islands university', in *A University for the Highlands and Islands Prospects and Possibilities* (Barail, Centre for Highlands and Islands Policy Studies, June 1992), 13–18.

Richard A.V. Cox, 'The Gaelic book', in David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (eds), *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland*, Volume 4, *Professionalism and Diversity, 1880–2000* (Edinburgh, 2007), 277–94.

Matthew Cragoe, 'The anatomy of an eviction campaign: the general election of 1868 in Wales and its aftermath', *Rural History*, 9 (1998), 177–93.

Matthew Cragoe, "'A contemptible mimic of the Irish": the land question in Victorian Wales' in Matthew Cragoe and Paul Readman (eds), *The Land Question in Britain, 1750–1914* (Basingstoke, 2010), 92–108.

Henry Craik, *A Century of Scottish History: From the Days Before the '45 to Those Within Living Memory* (Edinburgh, 1901).

Jeremy Crang, 'The Second World War' in Edward M. Spiers, Jeremy A. Crang and Matthew J. Strickland (eds), *A Military History of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2012), 571–85.

Ian A. Crawford, 'Feannagan taomaidh (lazy beds)', *Scottish Studies*, 6 (1962),

Cregeen, Eric, 'The tacksmen and their successors: a study of tenurial reorganisation in Mull, Morvern and Tiree in the early eighteenth century', *Scottish Studies*, 13 (1969), 93–114.

Trevor Croft, 'Conservation charity land ownership in Scotland', *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 120 (2004), 71–82.

James Cromb, *The Majuba Disaster: A Story of Highland Heroism Told by Officers of the 92nd Regiment* (Dundee, 1891).

James Cromb and David L. Cromb, *The Highland Brigade: Its Battles and Heroes* (Stirling, 1902).

L. Perry Curtis Jr, *The Depiction of Eviction in Ireland, 1845–1910* (Dublin, 2011).

Catherine Czerkawaska, *God's Islanders: A History of the People of Gigha* (Edinburgh, 2006).

Saul David, *Churchill's Sacrifice of the Highland Division, France 1940* (London, 1994).

Ros Davies and Eilidh Garrett, 'More Irish than the Irish? Nuptiality and fertility patterns on the Isle of Skye, 1881–1891', in R.J. Morris and Liam Kennedy (eds), *Ireland and Scotland: Order and Disorder, 1600–2000* (Edinburgh, 2005), 85–98.

Michael Dawson, 'The Liberal land policy, 1924–1929: electoral strategy and internal division', *Twentieth Century British History*, 2 (1991), 272–90.

Gerard J. De Groot, *Liberal Crusader: The Life of Sir Archibald Sinclair* (London, 1993).

Gerard J. De Groot, *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War* (London, 1996).

Philomena de Lima and Sharon Wright, 'Welcoming migrants? Migrant labour in rural Scotland', *Social Policy and Society* 8 (2009), 391–404.

Terence Denman, "'The red livery of shame": the campaign against army recruitment in Ireland, 1899–1914', *Irish Historical Studies*, 29 (1994–5), 208–33.

Patrick Delaforce, *Monty's Highlanders: 51st Division in the Second World War* (Barnsley, 2007).

T.M. Devine, *The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1988).

T. M. Devine, 'The Emergence of a New Elite in the Western Highlands and Islands, 1800–60', in T. M. Devine (ed.), *Improvement and Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1989), 108–42.

T. M. Devine, 'The paradox of Scottish emigration', in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Scottish Emigration and Scottish Society* (Edinburgh, 1992), 1–15.

T.M. Devine, *Clanship to Crofters' War: The Social Transformation of the Scottish Highlands* (Manchester, 1994).

T.M. Devine, *To the Ends of the Earth: Scotland's Global Diaspora, 1750–2010* (London, 2011).

Clive Dewey, 'Celtic Agrarian Legislation and the Celtic Revival: Historicist Implications of Gladstone's Irish and Scottish Land Acts 1870–1886', *Past and Present*, 64 (August 1974), 30–70.

Clive Dewey, 'Images of the Village Community: A Study in Anglo-Indian Ideology', *Modern Asian Studies*, 6 (1972), 291–328.

P.E. Dewey, 'Military recruiting and the British labour force during the First World War', *Historical Journal*, 27 (1984), 199–223.

Robert A. Dodgshon, 'Farming practice in the western highlands and islands before crofting: a study in cultural inertia or opportunity costs?', *Rural History*, 3 (1992), 173–89.

Robert A. Dodgshon, 'Strategies of farming in the western highlands and islands of Scotland prior to crofting and the clearances', *Economic History Review*, new ser., 46 (1993), 679–701.

Richard Doherty, *None Bolder: The History of the 51st Highland Division in the Second World War* (Stroud, 2006).

Terence M. Dooley, *'The Land for the People': The Land Question in Independent Ireland* (Dublin, 2004).

Terence M. Dooley, 'Land and politics in independent Ireland, 1933–48: the case for reappraisal', *Irish Historical Studies*, 34 (2004), 175–97.

Nancy C. Dorian, *Language Death: The Life Cycle of a Scottish Gaelic Dialect* (Philadelphia, 1981).

Nancy C. Dorian, 'Linguistic lag as an ethnic marker', *Language and Society*, 9 (1980), 33–41.

Danny Dorling, *Population 10 Billion: The Coming Demographic Crisis and How to Survive It* (London, 2013).

R.M. Dorson, *The British Folklorists: A Study* (London, 1968), 392–403; D. Doris, 'Contexts of ambivalence: the folklorist activities of nineteenth-century highland ministers', *Folklore*, 103 (1992), 207–21.

Camille Dressler, *Eigg: The Story of an Island* (Edinburgh, 1998).

Brian S. Duffield and Graham Hills, *Community Development and Higher Education: A Case Study of the University of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Inverness and Brussels, 1998).

J.P.D. Dunbabin, *Rural Discontent in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (New York, 1974).

J.P.D. Dunbabin, 'Electoral reforms and their outcome in the United Kingdom', in T.R. Gourvish and Alan O'Day (eds), *Later Victorian Britain, 1867–1900* (London, 1988),

Robert Dunbar, 'Gaelic in Scotland: the legal and institutional background', in Wilson McLeod (ed.), *Revitalising Gaelic in Scotland: Policy, Planning and Public Discourse* (Edinburgh, 2006),

Andrew Dunlop, *Fifty Years of Irish Journalism* (Dublin, 1911)

Alistair J. Durie, "'Unconscious benefactors": grouse-shooting in Scotland, 1780–1914', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 15 (1998),

Alistair J. Durie, 'Game shooting: an elite sport, c. 1870–1980', *Sport in History*, 28 (2008), 431–49.

V.E. Durkacz, 'Gaelic education in the nineteenth century', *Scottish Educational Studies*, 9 (1977),

Michael Dyer, *Capable Citizens and Improvident Democrats: The Scottish Electoral System, 1884–1929* (Aberdeen, 1996).

Emma Dymock, 'The quest for identity in Sorley MacLean's "An Cuilithionn": journeying into politics and beyond', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2008.

Emma Dymock, *The Poetry of Sorley MacLean* (Glasgow, 2011).

Matthew P. Dziennik, 'Whig tartan: material culture and its use in the Scottish highlands in the Scottish highlands, 1746–1815', *Past and Present*, no 217 (November 2012),

Stephen Emmot, *Ten Billion* (London, 2013).

Charlotte Erickson, 'Who were the English and Scottish emigrants to the United States in the late nineteenth century', in Charlotte Erickson, *Leaving England: Essays on British emigration in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, New York, 1994), 87–125.

John Erickson, 'Scotland's defence commitment: some problems of cost, capability and effectiveness', in J.N. Wolfe (ed.), *Government and Nationalism in Scotland: An Enquiry by Members of the University of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1969).

Lindsay Errington, *William McTaggart, 1835–1910* (Edinburgh, 1989).

Krisztina Fenyő, *Contempt, Sympathy and Romance: Lowland Perceptions of the Highlands and the Clearances During the Famine Years, 1845–1855* (East Linton, 2000).

Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London, 1998).

Richard J. Finlay, "'For or against?", Scottish nationalists and the British Empire, 1919–1939', *Scottish Historical Review*, 71 (1992), 184–206.

Richard. J. Finlay, *Independent and Free: Scottish Politics and the Origins of the Scottish National Party, 1918 –1945* (Edinburgh, 1994).

R.J. Finlay, ‘National identity in crisis: politicians, intellectuals and the “end of Scotland”’, 1920–1939’, *History*, 79 (1994), 242–59.

Joshua Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages* (Clevedon, 1991).

David Fitzpatrick, ‘Militarism in Ireland, 1900–22’, in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (eds), *A Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996), 379–406.

Michael Flinn (ed.), *Scottish Population History from the 17th Century to the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1977).

John Fowler (ed.), *Bannerman: The Memoirs of Lord Bannerman of Kildonan* (Aberdeen, 1972).

John R. Frame, ‘America and the Scottish left: the impact of American ideas on the Scottish labour movement from the American Civil War to World War One’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1998.

Marjory Kennedy Fraser, *A Life of Song* (Oxford, 1929).

Frank Fraser Darling, *Island Years* (London, 1940).

Frank Fraser Darling, *Island Farm* (London, 1943).

Frank Fraser Darling, *Crofting Agriculture* (Edinburgh, 1945).

Frank Fraser Darling, *West Highland Survey: An Essay in Human Ecology* (London, 1955).

Frank Fraser Darling, ‘Ecology of land use in the highlands and islands’, in Derick S. Thomson and Ian Grimble (eds), *The Future of the Highlands* (London, 1968), 29–55.

Frank Fraser Darling, *Wilderness and Plenty* (London, 1970).

Ada Goodrich Freer, *Outer Isles* (London, 1903).

Andrew Gailey, *Ireland and the Death of Kindness: The Experience of Constructive Unionism* (Cork, 1987).

Robert Gerwarth, *Hitler’s Hangman: The Life of Heydrich* (New Haven, 2011).

Rob Gibson, *Crofter Power in Easter Ross: The Land League at Work, 1884–8* (Evanton, 1986).

Donald Gilchrist, *Castle Commando* (Edinburgh, 1960),

William Gillies, 'A century of Gaelic scholarship', in William Gillies (ed.), *Gaelic and Scotland: Alba agus a' Ghaidhlig* (Edinburgh, 1989).

John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold, 'To be free and independent: crofting, popular protest and Lord Leverhulme's Hebridean development projects, 1917–25', *Rural History*, 7 (1996), 191–206;

Laurence Gourievidis, 'The Image of the Highland Clearances, c. 1880–1990', unpublished PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, 1993.

Keith Graham, 'The rocket-range cases', in *No Ordinary Court: 100 Years of the Scottish Land Court* (Edinburgh, 2012), 111–21.

I.F. Grant, *Highland Folk Ways* (London, 1961).

Isobel Frances Grant, *The Making of Am Fasgadh: An Account of the Origins of the Highland Folk Museum by its Founder* (Edinburgh, 2007).

James Shaw Grant, *A Shilling for Your Scowl: The History of a Scottish Legal Mafia* (Stornoway, 1992).

Lachlan Grant, *A New Deal for the Highlands* (Glasgow, 1935).

James Grassie, *Highland Experiment* (Aberdeen, 1983).

D. Green (ed.), *Cobbett's Tour in Scotland in the Autumn of the Year 1832* (Aberdeen, 1984).

Malcolm Gray, 'Crofting and fishing in the north-west highlands, 1890–1914', *Northern Scotland*, 1 (1972), 89–114.

Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge, 2008).

Clare V. J. Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside: The Politics of Rural Britain* (Oxford, 2007).

Pys Gruffudd, 'Back to the land: historiography, rurality and the nation in the interwar Wales', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 19 (1994), 61–77.

Iain Fraser Grigor, *Mightier than a Lord: The Highland Crofters Struggle for the Land* (Stornoway, 1979).

I.F. Grigor, 'The seven men of Knoydart', in Billy Kay (ed.), *The Complete Odyssey: Voices from Scotland's Recent Past* (Edinburgh, 1996).

Neil Gunn, *Off in a Boat* (London, 1938).

Douglas Hall, 'William McTaggart. Edinburgh', *Burlington Magazine*, 131 (1989), 732–3.

H.J. Hanham, 'Religion and nationality in the mid-Victorian army', in M.R.D. Foot (ed.), *War and Society: Essays in Honour and memory of J.R. Western, 1928–1971* (London, 1973),

Marjory Harper, 'Crofter colonists in Canada: an experiment in empire settlement in the 1920s', *Northern Scotland* 14 (1994), 69–108.

Marjory Harper, *Emigration from Scotland Between the Wars: Opportunity or Exile?* (Manchester, 1998).

Marjory Harper, *Scots at Large: Emigration from Scotland in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 2012).

Marjory Harper and Stephen Constantine, *Migration and Empire* (Oxford, 2010).

Marjory Harper and Nicholas Evans, 'Socio-economic dislocation and inter-war emigration to Canada and the United States: a Scottish snapshot', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 34 (2006), 529–92.

Robert Harris and Jeremy Paxman, *A Higher Form of Killing: The Secret History of Chemical and Biological Warfare* (London, 2002).

Hamish Henderson, 'Ballad of the men of Knoydart', in *Collected Poems and Songs*, ed. R. Ross (Edinburgh, 2000), 128–30.

P.M. Hobson, 'Congestion and depopulation: a study in rural contrasts between West Lewis and West Sutherland', unpublished PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, 1952.

Jack Holmes Planning Group, *County of Sutherland Development Plan* (Glasgow, 1973).

J.T. Hughes, 'HIDB development policy: a response', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 99 (1983), 121–4.

James Hunter, 'The Gaelic connection: the highlands, Ireland and nationalism, 1873 to 1922', *SHR*, 54 (1975), 178–204.

James Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh, 1976).

James Hunter (ed.), *For the People's Cause: From the Writings of John Murdoch* (Edinburgh, 1986).

James Hunter, *The Claim of Crofting: The Scottish Highlands and Islands, 1930–1990* (Edinburgh, 1991).

James Hunter, *The Highland Fund, 1953–1991* (Glasgow, 1992).

J. Hunter, *The Other Side of Sorrow: Nature and People in the Scottish Highlands*, (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1995).

James Hunter, *From the Low Tide of the Sea to the Highest Mountain Tops: Community Ownership of Land in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Kershader, 2012),

I.G.C Hutchison, *A Political History of Scotland, 1832–1924: Parties, Elections and Issues* (Edinburgh, 1976).

I. G. C. Hutchison, 'The nobility and politics in Scotland, c1880–1939', in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Scottish Elites* (Edinburgh, 1994), 131–51.

Roger Hutchison, *The Soap Man: Lewis, Harris and Lord Leverhulme* (Edinburgh, 2003).

Roger Hutchison, *Calum's Road* (Edinburgh, 2006).

Roger Hutchison, *Father Allan: The Life and Legacy of a Hebridean Priest* (Edinburgh, 2010).

Bill Innes (ed.), *Chì Mi: I See. Domhnall Iain MacDhòmhnaill: The Gaelic Poetry of John MacDonald* (Edinburgh, 1998).

Karl Ittmann, 'Demography as policy science in the British Empire, 1918–69', *Journal of Policy History*, 15 (2003), 417–48.

E.A. James, *British Regiments, 1914–1918* (London, 1978).

Keith Jeffery, 'The Irish military tradition and the British empire', in Keith Jeffery (ed.), *An Irish Empire? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester, 1996), 94–122.

Nuala C. Johnson, 'Building a nation: an examination of the Irish Gaeltacht Commission Report of 1926', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 19 (1993), 157–68.

Thomas Johnston, *Our Scots Noble Families* (Glasgow, 1909).

David Seth Jones, *Graziers, Land Reform, and Political Conflict in Ireland* (Washington DC, 1995).

David Seth Jones, 'Land reform legislation and security of tenure in Ireland after independence', *Eire-Ireland*, 32/33 (1997–8), 116–43.

David Seth Jones, 'Divisions within the Irish government over land-distribution policy, 1940–70', *Eire-Ireland*, 36 (2001), 83–109.

David Keir, *Desolation of the Highlands* (London, 1938).

James Kelman, 'Clearance and eviction in South Lochs: a personal exploration', in Ewen A. Cameron (ed.), *Recovering from the Clearances: Land Struggle, Resettlement, and Community Ownership in the Hebrides* (Kershader, 2013).

Colin Kidd, 'Teutonic ethnology and Scottish nationalist inhibition, 1780–1880', *Scottish Historical Review*, 74 (1995), 45–68.

Colin Kidd, 'Race, empire and the limits of nineteenth-century Scottish nationhood', *Historical Journal*, 46 (2003), 873–92.

Sheila M. Kidd, 'Social control and social criticism: the nineteenth-century *Còmradh*', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 20 (2000), 67–87.

Sheila Kidd, 'Burning issues: reactions to the Highland press during the 1885 election campaign', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 24 (2008), 285–307.

D. King and V. Nash, 'Continuity of Ideas and the Politics of Higher Education Expansion in Britain from Robbins to Dearing', *Twentieth Century British History*, 12 (2001), 191–7.

Neville Kirk, "'A state of war in the valley of Glencoe': the Ballachulish quarries dispute, 1902–5", *Scottish Labour History*, 38 (2003), 14–36.

Neville Kirk, *Custom and Conflict in "the land of the Gael": Ballachulish, 1900–1910* (Monmouth, 2007).

W.W. Knox and Alan McKinlay, 'The re-making of Scottish Labour in the 1930s', *Twentieth Century British History*, 6 (1995), 174–93.

Janet Laible, 'The Scottish Parliament and its capacity for redistributive policy: the case of land reform', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 61 (2008), 160–84.

William Lamb, 'A diachronic account of Gaelic news-speak: the development and expansion of a register', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 19 (1999),

Alex Law, 'Melting the Cold War permafrost: restructuring the military industry in Scotland', *Antipode*, 31 (1999), 421–52.

K. J. Lea, 'Hydro-electric power developments and the landscape in the highlands of Scotland', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 84 (1968), 239–47.

A.T.A. Learmonth, 'The population of Skye', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 66 (1950),

Robert W. Lee, 'The development of population history (historical demography) in Great Britain from the late nineteenth century to the early 1960s', *Historical Social Research*, 31 (2006), 34–63.

Leah Leneman, 'Borgie: a debatable gift to the nation', *Northern Scotland*, 9 (1989), 77–82.

Leah Leneman, *Fit for Heroes? Land Settlement in Scotland after World War I* (Aberdeen, 1989).

Ian Levitt, 'The creation of the Highlands and Islands Development Board', 1935–65', *Northern Scotland*, 19 (1999), 85–106.

Ian Levitt, 'Regenerating the Scottish highlands: Whitehall and the Fort William pulp mill', *JSHS*, 25 (2005), 21–39.

Brian Lewis, *'So Clean': Lord Leverhulme, Soap and Civilisation* (Manchester, 2008).

Francis Lindley, *Lord Lovat: A Biography* (London, 1935).

Denis Linehan and Pyrs Gruffudd, 'Unruly topographies: unemployment, citizenship and land settlement in inter-war Wales', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 29 (2004), 46–63.

Hayden Lorimer, "'Your wee bit hill and glen": the cultural politics of the Scottish highlands, c.1918–1945', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Loughborough, 1997.

Hayden Lorimer, 'Happy hostelling in the highlands': citizenship and the inter-war youth movement', *SGM*, 113 (1997), 42–50.

Lord Lovat, *March Past: A Memoir* (London, 1978).

Bill Luckin, *Questions of Power: Electricity and Environment in Inter-war Britain* (Manchester, 1990).

John MacAskill, *We Have Won The Land: The story of the purchase by the Assynt Crofters' Trust of the North Lochinver Estate* (Stornoway, 1999).

John MacAskill, 'The crofting community right to buy in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003', *Scottish Affairs*, no 49 (Autumn 2004), 104–33.

Angela McCarthy, 'The Scottish diaspora since 1815', in T.M. Devine and Jenny Wormald (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Scottish History* (Oxford, 2012), 510–32.

Alison M. McCleery, 'The role of the Highland development agency with particular reference to the work of the Congested Districts Board, 1897–1912', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 1984.

Allan W. MacColl, *Land, Faith and the Crofting Community: Christianity and Social Criticism in the Highlands of Scotland, 1843–1893* (Edinburgh, 2006).

John MacCormick, *The Flag in the Wind: The Story of the National Movement in Scotland* (London, 1955).

David McCrone, 'Land, Democracy and Culture in Scotland', *Scottish Affairs*, No. 23 (Spring 1998), 73–92.

David McCrone and Angela Morris, 'Lords and heritages: the transformation of the great lairds of Scotland', in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Scottish Elites* (Edinburgh, 1994),

Gavin McCrone, *Regional Policy in Britain* (London, 1969).

James N. McCrorie, *The Highland Cause: The Life and Times of Roderick MacFarquhar* (Regina, Saskatchewan, 2001).

Donald J. MacCuish, 'The case for converting crofting tenure to ownership', *TGSI*, 46 (1969–70),

Margery McCulloch, *The Novels of Neil M. Gunn: A Critical Study* (Edinburgh, 1987).

Colin M. MacDonald, *Highland Journey* (Edinburgh, 1943).

Fraser MacDonald, 'Geopolitics and the "vision thing": regarding Britain and America's first nuclear missile', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, new ser., 31 (2006), 53–71.

Fraser MacDonald, 'The last outpost of empire: Rockall and the Cold War', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 32 (2006), 627–47.

Stuart MacDonald, 'Crofter colonisation in Canada, 1886–1892: the Scottish political background', *Northern Scotland*, 7 (1986–7),

Archie MacDougall, *Knoydart: The Last Scottish Land Raid*, (Billingham, 1993).

Sir Alexander MacEwen, 'A dictator for the highlands? The strengths and weaknesses of the Scottish Economic Committee's Report', *Scots Magazine*, 30 (1938–9), 293–8.

Alexander MacEwen, *Act Now for the Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1939).

D.H. MacFarlane, *Ireland versus England* (London, 1880).

Neil MacGillivray, 'Dr John MacKenzie (1803–86): proponent of scientific agriculture and opponent of highland emigration', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 33 (2013), 81–100.

John McGrath, 'The Year of the Cheviot', in John McGrath, *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* (revised, illustrated edition, London, 1993).

John McGrath, *Six-Pack: Plays for Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1996).

John McGregor, *The West Highland Railway: Plans, Politics and People* (East Linton, 2005).

Ian MacIlleachiar, 'Gaelic-medium schools – Why? And When?', in John Hulbert (ed.), *Gaelic: Looking to the Future* (Edinburgh, 1985), 28–33.

Ragnall MacilleDhuibh, 'Missing presumed killed', *West Highland Free Press*, 10 Jul. 1992, 11

Allan I. Macinnes, *Clanship, Commerce and the House of Stuart, 1603–1788* (East Linton, 1996).

John MacInnes, 'Gaelic poetry in the nineteenth century', in Douglas Gifford (ed.), *The History of Scottish Literature*, Volume 3, *Nineteenth Century* (Aberdeen, 1989),

Lt.Col. John MacInnes, *The Brave Sons of Skye* (Edinburgh, 1899).

Alistair McIntosh, *Soil and Soul: People versus Corporate Power* (London, 2001),.

Evander McIver, *Memoirs of a Highland Gentleman: Being the Reminiscences of Evander McIver of Scourie*, (ed.) Rev. George Henderson (Edinburgh, 1905).

Val MacIver, 'The case for a university in the highlands and islands', in *A University for the Highlands and Islands Prospects and Possibilities* (Barail, Centre for Highlands and Islands Policy Studies, June 1992), 8–13

Donald MacKay, 'The Congested Districts Boards of Ireland and Scotland', *Northern Scotland*, 16 (1996), 141–73.

Peter MacKay, *Sorley MacLean* (Aberdeen, 2010).

Mary MacKellar, *The Tourist's Hand-book of Gaelic and English Phrases for the Highlands* (Edinburgh, no date).

Linda Mackenney (ed.), *Joe Corrie: Plays, Poems and Theatre Writings* (Edinburgh, 1985).

Linda Mackenney, 'The People's Story: 7:84 Scotland', in Randall Stevenson and Gavin Wallace (eds), *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies* (Edinburgh, 1996),

Alexander MacKenzie, *History of the Highland Clearances* (Inverness, 1883).

Angus MacKenzie, 'Self-help and propaganda: Scottish National Development Council, 1931–1939', *JSHS*, 30 (2010), 123–45.

A. Fiona D. MacKenzie, 'A working land: crofting communities, place and the politics of the possible in post-Land Reform Scotland', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, new ser. 31 (2006), 383–98;

A. Fiona D. MacKenzie, *Places of Possibility: Property, Nature and Community Land Ownership* (Oxford, 2013).

John MacKenzie, *Letter to Lord John Russell on Sir John MacNeill's Report on the State of the West Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1851).

Niall G. MacKenzie, "'Chucking buns across the fence": governmental planning and regeneration projects in the Scottish highland economy, 1945–82', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2008.

W.C. MacKenzie, *History of the Outer Hebrides* (Paisley and London, 1903).

W.C. MacKenzie, 'The Highlands and the War', *Stornoway Gazette*, 3 Jan. 1919

W.C. MacKenzie, *The Highlands and Islands of Scotland: A Historical Survey*, rev. edn (Edinburgh and London, 1949).

Andrew MacKillop, *'More Fruitful than the Soil': Army, Empire and the Scottish Highlands, 1715–1815* (East Linton, 2000).

MacKillop, 'The Political culture of the Scottish highlands after Culloden', *Historical Journal*, 46 (2003), 511–32

Andrew MacKillop, 'The highlands and the returning nabob: Sir Hector Munro of Novar, 1760–1807', in Marjory Harper (ed.), *Emigrant Homecomings: The Return Movement of emigrants, 1600–2000* (Manchester, 2005), 233–61.

Donald MacKinnon and Lachlan MacKinnon (eds), *Prose Writings of Donald MacKinnon, 1839–1914* (Edinburgh, 1956).

Kenneth MacKinnon, *Gaelic: A Past and Future Prospect* (Edinburgh, 1991).

Kenneth MacKinnon, 'Growing a new generation of Gaelic-speakers: an action plan in response to a ministerial initiative', in John M. Kirk and Dónal P. Ó Baoill, *Strategies for Minority languages: Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Scotland* (Belfast, 2011), 212–22.

Allan Campbell McLean, *Ribbon of Fire* (London, 1962) .

John MacLean, 'The late Professor James Carmichael Watson', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, v (1938–42), 185–7.

Samuel MacLean, 'Realism in Gaelic Poetry', *TGSI*, 37 (1934–6), 80–114.

Samuel MacLean, 'The Poetry of the Clearances', *TGSI*, 38 (1937–41), 293–324.

Donald Maclean, 'Donald Mackinnon MA, Emeritus Professor of Celtic, University of Edinburgh', *Celtic Review*, 10 (1914), 63–8.

Marianne McLean, *The People of Glengarry: Highlanders in Transition, 1745–1820* (Montreal, 1991).

Angus MacLellan, *The Furrow Behind Me: The Autobiography of a Hebridean Crofter*, translated by John Lorne Campbell (Edinburgh, 1997).

Anne MacLeod, 'The Highland landscape: visual depictions, 1760–1883' in Broun and MacGregor (eds), *Mìorun Mòr nan Gal*, 128–57.

Donald MacLeod's *Gloomy Memories in the Highlands of Scotland* (Toronto, 1857).

Jenny Macleod, 'Memorials and Location: Local versus National Identity and the Scottish National War Memorial', *Scottish Historical Review*, 89 (2010), 73–95.

Jenny Macleod, "'By Scottish Hands, with Scottish Money, on Scottish Soil": the Scottish National War Memorial and National Identity', *Journal of British Studies*, 49 (2010), 73–96.

John MacLeod, 'The sea of sorrow', *The Herald Magazine*, 2 Jan. 1999, 7–10.

John MacLeod, *When I Heard the Bell: The Loss of the Iolair* (Edinburgh, 2009).

John MacLeod, *None Dare Oppose: The Laird, the Beast and the People of Lewis* (Edinburgh, 2010).

Murdo MacLeod, 'Did the people of Lewis refuse Lord Leverhulme's schemes?', *TGSI*, 42 (1958), 257–70.

Angus MacMillan, 'Stòras Uibhist: recovering from the clearances', 179–89 in Ewen A. Cameron (ed.), *Recovering from the Clearances: Land Struggle, Resettlement, and Community Ownership in the Hebrides* (Kershader, 2013).

Douglas C. MacMillan, 'An economic case for land reform', *Land Use Policy*, 17 (2000), 49–57.

Aonghas MacNeacail, *dènamh gàire ris ' chloc, dàin ùra agus thagte: laughing at the clock, new and selected poems* (Edinburgh, 2012).

Louis MacNeice, *I Crossed the Minch* (London, 1938).

I.M.M. MacPhail, 'The Napier Commission', *TGSI*, 48 (1972–4),

I.M.M. MacPhail, 'The Skye military expedition of 1884–5', *TGSI*, 48 (1972–4), 62–94.

I.M.M. MacPhail, 'The highland elections of 1884–1886', *TGSI*, 50 (1976–8), 369–92.

I.M.M. MacPhail, 'Gunboats to the Hebrides', *TGSI*, 53 (1982–4), 542–52.

I.M.M. MacPhail, *The Crofters' War* (Stornoway, 1989).

Isobel MacPhail, 'Land, crofting and the Assynt Crofters Trust: a post-colonial geography', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales, Lampeter, 2002.

Margaret MacPherson, *The Shinty Boys* (London, 1963).

Margaret MacPherson, *The Rough Road* (London, 1965).

Bernhard Maier, 'A kaleidoscope of Victorian Scotland: the life of Alexander Nicolson (1827–1893)', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 26 (2010),

George Malcolm, *Population, Crofts, Sheep Walks and Deer Forests* (Edinburgh, 1883).

Kevin Manton, 'The Labour party and the land question, 1919–51', *Historical Research*, 79 (2006), 247–69.

Laurence Marley, *Michael Davitt: Freelance Radical and Frondeur* (Dublin, 2007).

Alexander S. Mather, 'The rise and fall of government-assisted land settlement in Scotland', *Land Use Policy*, 2 (1985),

Alexander S. Mather, 'The Congested District Board for Scotland', in W. Ritchie, J. Stone and A.S.Mather (eds), *Essays for Professor R. E. H. Mellor* (Aberdeen, 1986), 196–200.

Duane Meyer, *The Highland Scots of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 1957).

Donald E. Meek, 'The Catholic knight of crofting: Sir Donald Horne MacFarlane, MP for Argyll, 1885–86, 1892–95', *TGSI*, 58 (1992–4),

Donald E. Meek (ed.), *Tuath is Tighearna: Tenants and Landlords. An Anthology of Gaelic Poetry of Social and Political Protest from the Clearances to the Land Agitation (1800–1890)*, (Edinburgh, 1996).

Donald E. Meek (ed.), *The Wiles of the World: Caran an t-Saoghail. Anthology of 19th Century Scottish Gaelic Verse* (Edinburgh, 2003).

Donald E. Meek, 'Preacher, prose-writer, politician, journalist and scholar: the Very Rev. Dr Thomas Moffat Murchison (1907–84)', *Scottish Church History Society Records*, 36 (2006), 5–27.

Donald E. Meek, 'Gaelic communities and the use of texts', in Bill Bell (ed.), *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland*, Volume 3, *Ambition and Industry 1800–1880* (Edinburgh, 2007), 153–72.

Donald E. Meek, 'Faking the "true Gael"? *Carmina Gadelica* and the beginning of modern Gaelic scholarship', *Aiste*, 1 (2007),

Joe Melling, *Rent Strikes: People's Struggle for Housing in West Scotland, 1890–1916* (Edinburgh, 1983).

M. L. Melville, *The Story of the Lovat Scouts* (Edinburgh, 1981).

Walter Mercer, 'The pre-Gibson chairmen' in *No Ordinary Court: 100 Years of the Scottish Land Court* (Edinburgh, 1912).

Peter Mewett, 'Economic brokerage and peripheral development in the Isle of Lewis', *Sociological Review*, 31 (1983), 427–52.

Alasdair Milne, *DG: The Memoirs of a British Broadcaster* (London, 1988).

Ian Mitchell, *Isles of the West* (Edinburgh, 1999).

Theodore M. Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution, 1846 to 1882* (Oxford, 1981).

Gerard Moran, 'Escape from hunger: the trials and tribulations of the Irish state-aided emigrants in North America in the 1880s', *Studia Hibernica*, 29 (1995–7), 197–208.

Marion F. Morrison, 'A' chiel ghinealach – the first generation: a survey of Gaelic-medium education in the Western Isles', in Wilson McLeod (ed.), *Revitalising Gaelic in Scotland: Policy, Planning and Public Discourse* (Edinburgh, 2006), 139–54.

Kirsteen Mulhern, 'The intellectual duke: George Douglas Campbell, eighth duke of Argyll, 1823–1900', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2006.

Martine Müller, 'Language-use, language attitudes and Gaelic-writing ability among secondary pupils in the Isle of Skye', in Wilson McLeod (ed.), *Revitalising Gaelic in Scotland: Policy, Planning and Public Discourse* (Edinburgh, 2006), 119–38.

Christopher J. Murphy, *Security and Special Operations: SOE and MI5 during the Second World War* (Houndmills, 2006).

Lord Napier, 'The Highland crofters: a vindication of the report of the Crofters Commission', *Nineteenth Century*, xvii (1885), 437–63.

Stana Nenadic, *Lairds and Luxury: The Highland Gentry in Eighteenth-century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2007).

A.G. Newby, 'Emigration and Clearance from the Island of Barra, c. 1770–1858', *TGSI*, 61 (2003), 116–48.

Andrew G. Newby, '"Scotia major and Scotia minor": Ireland and the birth of Scottish land agitation, 1878–82', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 31 (2004), 23–40.

Andrew G. Newby, *Ireland, Radicalism and the Scottish Highlands, c. 1870–1912* (Edinburgh, 2007).

Andrew G. Newby, 'Land and the "crofter question" in nineteenth-century Scotland', *International Review of Scottish Studies*, 35 (2010), 7–36.

David Newlands and Margaret Parker, 'The prospects and potential of a new university in the highlands and islands', *Scottish Affairs*, no. 21 (Autumn 1997), 78–94.

Robin Nicholson, 'Lochaber no more: landscape, emigration and the Scottish artist, 1849–1895', *Nineteenth Century Art Worldwide*, 7 (2008) [ejournal: no pages].

W.F.H. Nicolaisen, 'In praise of W.J. Watson (1865–1948): Celtic place-name scholar', *Scottish Language*, 14/15 (1995/6), 15–30.

- Alexander Nicolson, 'The last cruise of the *Lively*', *Good Words for 1883*, 606–12.
- Alexander Nicolson, *History of Skye*, 3rd edn, ed. Cailean MacLean (Kershader, 2012).
- Alexander Nicolson, *The Guidebook to the Isle of Skye and Adjacent Islands* (Glasgow, no date).
- James Nicolson, 'The sea', in Alistair Hethrington (ed.), *Highlands and Islands: A Generation of Progress* (Aberdeen, 1990), 81–99.
- Nigel Nicolson, *Lord of the Isles: Lord Leverhulme in the Hebrides* (London, 1960).
- Andrew Noble, 'Urbane silence: Scottish writing and the nineteenth-century city', in George Gordon (ed.), *Perspectives of the Scottish City* (Aberdeen, 1985).
- John Noble, *Miscellanea Invernessiana: With a Bibliography of Inverness Newspapers and Periodicals* (Stirling, 1902).
- Wayne W. Norton, 'Malcolm MacNeill and the emigrationist alternative to highland land reform, 1886 to 1893', *SHR*, 70 (1991), 16–30.
- Fiona O'Hanlon, Lindsay Paterson and Wilson McLeod, 'The attainment of pupils in Gaelic-medium primary-education in Scotland', *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, published online, 2012, 1–23, [<http://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2012.711807>].
- Glen O'Hara, "'We are faced everywhere with a growing population": demographic change and the British state, 1955–1964', *Twentieth Century British History*, 15 (2004), 243–66.
- M.A.G. Ó'Tuathaigh, 'The land question, politics and Irish society, 1922–60' in P.J. Drudy (ed.), *Ireland: Land, Politics and People* (Cambridge, 1982), 167–87.
- Richard Ormond, *The Monarch of the Glen: Landseer in the Highlands* (Edinburgh, 2005).
- Willie Orr, *Deer Forests, Landlords and Crofters: The Western Highlands in Victorian and Edwardian Times* (Edinburgh, 1982).
- Ian Packer, *Lloyd George, Liberalism and the Land: The Land Issue and Party Politics in England, 1906–1914* (Woodbridge, 2001).
- Martin Padget, *Photographers of the Western Isles* (Edinburgh, 2010).
- John B. Parr, 'Growth-pole strategies in regional economic planning: a retrospective view. Part 1: origins and advocacy', *Urban Studies*, 36 (1999), 1195–1215.

John B. Parr, 'Growth-pole strategies in regional economic planning: a retrospective view. Part 2: implementation and outcome', *Urban Studies*, 36 (1999), 1247–68.

Peter L. Payne, *Hydro: A Study of The Development of the Major Hydro-Electric Schemes Undertaken by The North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board* (Aberdeen, 1988).

Anthony Parker, *Scottish Highlanders in Colonial Georgia: The Recruitment, Emigration and Settlement at Darien* (Athens, Georgia and London, 1997).

Cyril Parry, 'Gwynedd and the Great War, 1914–18', *Welsh History Review*, 14 (1988–9), 78–117.

George C. Peden, *The Treasury and British Public Policy, 1906–1959* (Oxford, 2000). S

Henry Pelling, *The Social Geography of British Elections, 1885–1910* (London, 1965).

Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2012).

Andrew Perchard, *Aluminiumville: Government, Global Business and the Scottish Highlands* (Lancaster, 2012).

Ray Perman, *The Man Who Gave Away His Island: A Life of John Lorne Campbell of Canna* (Edinburgh, 2010).

Aylwin Pillai, 'Sustainable rural communities: a legal perspective on the community right to buy', *Land Use Policy*, 27 (2010), 898–905.

John Prebble, *The King's Jaunt* (London, 1988).

Richard Price, *The Fabulous Matter of Fact: The Poetic of Neil M. Gunn* (Edinburgh, 1991).

Hugh Quigley, *A Plan for the Highlands, Proposals for a Highland Development Board*, (London, 1936).

John Rae, *Contemporary Socialism* (London, 1884).

P.J.G. Ransom, *Iron Road: The Railway in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2007).

E. G. Ravenstein, 'On the Celtic languages in the British Isles: a statistical survey', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 42 (1879),

Paul Readman, 'The Conservative part, patriotism, and British politics: the case of the general election of 1900', *Journal of British Studies*, 40 (2001), 107–45.

Linda Riddell, 'Shetland and the Great War', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2012.

Eric Richards, 'How tame were the Highlanders during the clearances?', *Scottish Studies*, xvii (1973), 35–50.

Eric Richards, 'Problems on the Cromartie Estate, 1851–3', *SHR*, 52 (1973), 149–64.

Eric Richards, 'Patterns of Highland Discontent, 1790–1860', in Roland Quinault and John Stevenson (eds), *Popular Protest and Public Order: Six Studies in British History, 1790–1820* (London, 1974), 75–114.

Eric Richards, *A History of the Highland Clearances: Agrarian Transformation and the Evictions, 1746–1886* (London, 1982).

Eric Richards, *A History of the Highland Clearances, Volume 2: Emigration, Protest, Reasons* (London, 1985).

Eric Richards, *The Last Scottish Food Riots*, Past and Present Supplement 6 (London, 1982).

Eric Richards, 'Highland emigration in the age of Malthus: Scourie, 1841–55', *Northern Scotland*, new series, 2 (2011), 60–82.

Eric Richards and Monica Clough, *Cromartie: Highland Life, 1650–1914* (Aberdeen, 1989).

Kathryn Rix, 'The elimination of corrupt practices in British elections? Reassessing the impact of the 1883 Corrupt Practices Act', *English Historical Review*, 123 (2008), 65–97.

Alasdair Roberts, 'Parental attitudes to Gaelic-medium education in the Western Isles of Scotland', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 12 (1991), 253–69.

Matthew Roberts, '"Arithmocracy": Parliament, community and the Third Reform Act', *Journal of British Studies*, 50 (2011), 381–409.

Boyd Robertson, 'Gaelic in Scotland', in Guus Extra and Durk Gorter (eds), *The Other Languages of Europe: Demographic, Sociolinguistic and Educational Perspectives* (Clevedon, 2001),

Hamish Robertson, 'Studies in Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica*', *Scottish Studies*, 18 (1978), 220–65.

Iain Robertson, 'Governing the highlands: the place of popular protest in the highlands of Scotland after 1918', *Rural History*, 8 (1997), 109–24.

Iain J. M. Robertson, 'The historical geography of social protest in highland Scotland, 1914–c.1939', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Bristol, 1998.

Sonya Rose, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Britain, 1939–45* (Oxford, 2003), 225–8.

S. Rosevear, 'Balancing business and the regions: British distribution of industry policy and the Board of Trade, 1945–51', *Business History* 40 (1998) 77–99.

David Ross, 'Taking control of a vital asset', *Glasgow Herald*, 18 Dec. 2012.

Raymond J. Ross, 'Marx, MacDiarmid and MacLean', in Raymond J. Ross and Joy Hendry (eds), *Sorley MacLean: Critical Essays* (Edinburgh, 1986), 91–108.

Trevor Royle, *Fighting Mac: The Downfall of Major-General Sir Hector Macdonald* (Edinburgh, 2003).

Trevor Royle, *The Flowers of the Forest: Scotland and the First World War* (Edinburgh, 2006).

J. B. Salmond, *The History of the 51st Highland Division, 1939–45* (Edinburgh, 1953).

Keith Scammell, 'Pre-school playgroups', in John Hulbert (ed.), *Gaelic: Looking to the Future* (Edinburgh, 1985), 28–33.

P. Scott, 'British regional policy, 1945–51: a lost opportunity', *Twentieth Century British History* 8 (1997) 358–82.

John A. Schultz, 'Canadian attitudes toward empire settlement', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 1 (1972–3), 237–51.

John A. Schultz, 'Finding homes fit for heroes: the Great War and empire settlement', *Canadian Journal of History*, 18 (1983), 99–110.

Captain I.H.M. Scobie, *An Old Highland Fencible Corps: The History of the Reay Fencible Highland Regiment of Foot, or MacKay's Highlanders, 1794 –1802* (Edinburgh, 1914).

Scottish Economic Committee, *The Highlands and Islands of Scotland: A Review of the Economic Conditions with Recommendations for Improvement* (no place, 1938).

John Shaw, 'Land, people and nation: historicist voices in the Highland land campaign, c. 1850–1883', in E.F. Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship and Community: Liberals, Radicals and Collective Identities in the British Isles, 1865–1931* (Cambridge, 1996), 305–324.

Donald Shaw, *The Idrigill Raiders* (Ullapool, 2010).

Margaret Fay Shaw, *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist*, 3rd edition (Aberdeen, 1986).

Margaret Fay Shaw, *From the Alleghenies to the Hebrides: An Autobiography* (Edinburgh, 1999).

John Sheail, 'The "amenity" clause: an insight into half a century of environmental protection in the United Kingdom', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 17 (1992), 152–65.

Mark Shucksmith and Graeme Lloyd, 'The HIDB, regional policy and the Invergordon closure', *National Westminster Bank Quarterly Review* (May, 1982), 14–25.

David Simpson, 'The lessons of Invergordon', *Quarterly Economic Commentary, Fraser of Allender Institute*, 7 (1982), 25–6.

Noel Skelton, *Constructive Conservatism* (Edinburgh and London, 1924).

William F. Skene, *Celtic Scotland: A History of Ancient Alban*, Volume III, *Land and People* (Edinburgh, 1880).

Sarah Skerratt, *Community Land Ownership and Community Resilience*, Rural Policy Centre Research Report, June 2011.

Annette M. Smith, *Jacobite Estates of the Forty-Five* (Edinburgh, 1982); Jean Dunlop, *The British Fisheries Society, 1786–1893* (Edinburgh, 1978).

John A. Smith, 'The position of Gaelic and Gaelic culture in Scottish education', in Derick S. Thomson and Ian Grimble (eds), *The Future of the Highlands* (London, 1968), 59–91.

John A. Smith, 'The 1872 Education (Scotland) Act and Gaelic Education', *TGSI*, 51 (1978–80),

John S. Smith, 'The Invergordon aluminium smelter: growth policy gone wrong? A note', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 98 (1982), 115–18.

Malcolm Spaven, *Fortress Scotland: A Guide to the Military Presence* (London, 1983).

Edward M. Spiers, *Late Victorian Army, 1868–1902* (Manchester, 1992).

Edward M. Spiers, *The Scottish Soldier and Empire, 1854–1902* (Edinburgh, 2006).

Edward M. Spiers, 'Highland soldier: imperial impact and image', *Northern Scotland*, new series, 1 (2010),

T. C. Smout, *A Century of the Scottish People, 1830–1950* (London, 1986).

T.C. Smout, N.C. Landsman and T.M. Devine, ‘Scottish emigration in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’, in N. Canny (ed.), *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration 1500–1800* (Oxford, 1994).

T.C. Smout, ‘Cutting into the pine: Loch Arkaig and Rothiemurchus in the eighteenth century’, in T.C.Smout (ed.), *Scottish Woodland History* (Dalkeith, 2002), 114–24.

T.C. Smout, ‘The highlands and the roots of green consciousness, 1750–1990’, in T. C. Smout, *Exploring Environmental History: Selected Essays* (Edinburgh, 2009), 21–52.

J.H. Stevenson, *The Story of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 91st and 93rd Foot* (Glasgow, 1915).

Domnhall Uilleam Stiùbhart, ‘Alexander Carmichael and *Carmina Gadelica*’, in Domnhall Uilleam Stiùbhart (ed.), *The Life and Legacy of Alexander Carmichael* (Port of Ness, 2008), 1–39.

A.M. Stoddart, *John Stuart Blackie*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1895).

Hew Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford, 1997).

Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857–1914* (Manchester, 2004).

Silke Stroh, *Uneasy Subjects: Postcolonialism and Scottish Gaelic Poetry* (Amsterdam, 2011).

Antony Taylor, ‘“Pig-sticking princes”: Royal hunting, moral outrage, and the republican opposition to animal abuse in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Britain’, *History*, 89 (2004), 30–48.

Mike Tichelar, ‘The Labour party, agricultural policy and the retreat from rural land nationalisation during the Second World War’, *Agricultural History Review*, 51 (2003), 209–25.

Annie Tindley, ‘“The sword of avenging justice”: Politics in Sutherland after the Third Reform Act’, *Rural History*, 19 (2008), 179–99

Annie Tindley, *The Sutherland Estate, 1850–1920: Aristocratic Decline, Estate Management and Land Reform* (Edinburgh, 2010).

Annie Tindley, ‘“The system of landlordism supreme”: David Lloyd George, the 5th duke of Sutherland and highland land sales, 1898–1919’, *British Scholar*, 3 (2010), 24–42.

Annie Tindley, “‘They sow the wind, they reap the whirlwind’: estate management in the post-clearance highlands, c. 1815 to c. 1900’, *Northern Scotland*, new series, 3 (2012), 66–85.

F.M.L. Thompson, ‘Epilogue: the strange death of the English land question’, in Matthew Cragoe and Paul Readman (eds), *The Land Question in Britain, 1750–1950* (Houndmills, 2010), 255–70.

Derick S. Thomson, ‘Publishing in Scottish Gaelic’, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 5 (1984), 259–65.

Jim Tomlinson, ‘Conservative modernisation, 1960–64: too little, too late?’, *Contemporary British History*, 11 (1997), 18–38.

David Torrance, *Noel Skelton and the Property-Owning Democracy* (London, 2010).

Alex Tyrrell, ‘The queen’s “little trip”: the royal visit to Scotland in 1842’, *Scottish Historical Review*, 82 (2003), 47–73.

Michael E. Vance, ‘British Columbia’s twentieth-century crofter emigration schemes: a note on new sources’, *Scottish Tradition*, 18 (1993), 1–27.

Jill Wade, ‘The “Gigantic Scheme”: crofter immigration and deep-sea fisheries development for British Columbia, 1887–93’, *BC Studies*, 53 (1982), 28–44.

Stephen P. Walker, ‘Agents of dispossession and acculturation: Edinburgh accountants and the highland clearances’, *Critical Perspectives in Accounting*, 14 (2003),

Alfred Russel Wallace, *Land Nationalisation. Its Necessity and its aims: Being a Comparison of the System of Landlord and Tenant with that of Occupying Ownership in their Influence on the Well-Being of the People* (London, 1882).

Graham Walker, *Thomas Johnston* (Manchester, 1988).

Maurice Walsh, *Trouble in the Glen* (Edinburgh, 1950).

Charles R. Warren and Annie McKee, ‘The Scottish revolution? Evaluating the impacts of post-devolution land reform’, *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 127 (2011),

Frederick Watson, *The Story of the Highland Regiments* (London, 1915).

William J. Watson, *Rosg Gaidhlig: Specimens of Gaelic Prose* (Inverness, 1915).

William J. Watson, *Bàrdachd Ghàidhlig: Specimens of Gaelic Poetry, 1550–1900* (Inverness, 1918).

William J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-names of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1926).

William J. Watson, *Place Names of Ross and Cromarty* (Inverness, 1904).

William J. Watson (ed.), *Scottish Verse from the Book of the Dean of Lismore* (Edinburgh, 1937).

Patrick Watt, *Steel and Tartan: The 4th Cameron Highlanders in the Great War* (Stroud, 2012).

Patrick Watt, 'The last Scottish invasion of England: the Highland Division in Bedford, 1914–1915', *History Scotland*, 13(1) (Jan/Feb, 2013), 44–9.

Peter Weiler, 'Labour and the land: from municipalisation to the Land Commission', *Twentieth Century British History*, 19 (2008), 314–43.

Michael Wigan, 'Scottish landowners feel the heat', *Country Life*, 2 Sep. 2013.

Elizabeth A. Willis, 'Landscape with dead sheep: what they did to Gruinard Island', *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, 18 (2002), 199–210.

Elizabeth A. Willis, 'Seascape with monkeys and guinea pigs: Britain's biological weapons research programme, 1948–54', *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, 19 (2003), 285–302.

Elizabeth A. Willis, 'Contamination and Compensation: Gruinard as a "menace to the mainland"', *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, 20 (2004), 334–43.

Brian Wilson, 'At last Gigha is freed from the petty power of the big house', *West Highland Free Press*, 21 Mar. 2002.

Brian Wilson, 'Let's hand the land to the people', *Scotsman*, 14 Mar. 2012

Harold Wilson, *The Labour Government, 1964–70: A Personal Record* (London, 1971).

Susan R. Wilson, *The Correspondence Between Hugh MacDiarmid and Sorley MacLean* (Edinburgh, 2010).

J. M. Winter, 'Some aspects of the demographic consequences of the First World War in Britain', *Population Studies*, 30 (1976), 539–52.

Niall Whelehan, *The Dynamiters: Irish Nationalism and Political Violence in the Wider World, 1867–1900* (Cambridge, 2012).

Christopher Whyte (ed.), Somhairle MacGill-Eain/Sorley MacLean, *An Cuilithionn 1939 and Unpublished Poems* (Glasgow, 2011).

Andrew Wiseman, 'The kilted exciseman: Alexander Carmichael (1832–1912)', *History Scotland*, 11(1), Jan/Feb 2011, 18–23.

Charles W.J. Withers, 'The geographical extent of Gaelic in Scotland, 1698–1806', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 97 (1981), 130–9.

Charles W.J. Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland, 1698–1981: The Geographical History of a Language* (Edinburgh, 1984).

C. W. J. Withers, "'The Image of the Land": Scotland's Geography through her languages and Literature', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 100 (1984), 81–95.

C. W. J. Withers, 'Rural protest in the highlands of Scotland and Ireland, 1850–1930', in S. J. Connolly, R. A. Houston and R. J. Morris (eds), *Conflict, Identity and Economic Development, Ireland and Scotland, 1600–1939* (Preston, 1995),

C.W.J. Withers, 'Landscape, memory, history: gloomy memories and the 19th-century Scottish highlands', *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 121 (2005), 29–44.

E.A. Wrigley, 'Malthus on the prospects for the labouring poor', *Historical Journal*, 31 (1988), 813–829.

Derek Young, 'Voluntary recruitment in Scotland, 1914 to 1916', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2001.